

THE BLACK EXPERIENCE IN AMERICA, VOL I

A collection of non-fiction, fiction, theater, and poetry from the 18th - 20th centuries by and/or about African-Americans. Source material for LibriVox project by BellonaTimes.

Oct 2012

All sources: Project Gutenberg.

Death of Charles, by Ida B. Wells-Barnett

3 Poems by James Weldon Johnson

Lawing and Jawing, by Zora Neale Hurston

Here Comes A Young Man Courting, by Thomas W Talley

Reporting, by Henry Ossian Flipper

Personal Liberty Laws, by Marion Gleason McDougall

Where The Negro Lives, by Mary White Ovington and Franz Boas

3 Interviews with Ex-Slaves, by Works Projects Administration

Your Negro Neighbor, by Benjamin Brawley

Excerpt from The Future of the American Negro, by Booker T. Washington

The Ku Klux Klan, by Eyre Damer

Of The Meaning of Progress, by W.E.B. Du Bois

Sketches of the Black Baptist Church, by Various

The Passing Tradition and The African Civilization, by Monroe N. Work

The Praline Woman, by Alice Dunbar

Hot Foot Hannibal, by Charles W. Chesnutt

A Plea For Industrial Opportunity, by Fanny Jackson Coppin

The Sunday School and Church..., by D. Webster Davis, D.D.

+DEATH OF CHARLES+

Excerpt from *Mob Rule in New Orleans*

Robert Charles and His Fight to Death, the Story of His Life, Burning

Human Beings Alive, Other Lynching Statistics (1900)

Author: Ida B. Wells-Barnett

Release Date: February 8, 2005 [EBook #14976]

Friday witnessed the final act in the bloody drama begun by the three police officers, Aucoin, Mora and Cantrelle. Betrayed into the hands of the police, Charles, who had already sent two of his would-be murderers to their death, made a last stand in a small building, 1210 Saratoga Street, and, still defying his pursuers, fought a mob of twenty thousand people, single-handed and alone, killing three more men, mortally wounding two more and seriously wounding nine others. Unable to get to him in his stronghold, the besiegers set fire to his house of refuge. While the building was burning Charles was shooting, and every crack of his death-dealing rifle added another victim to the price which he had placed upon his own life. Finally, when fire and smoke became too much for flesh and blood to stand, the long sought for fugitive appeared in the door, rifle in hand, to charge the countless guns that were drawn upon him.

With a courage which was indescribable, he raised his gun to fire again, but this time it failed, for a hundred shots riddled his body, and he fell dead face fronting to the mob. This last scene in the terrible drama is thus described in the _Times-Democrat_ of July 26:

Early yesterday afternoon, at 3 o'clock or thereabouts, Police Sergeant Gabriel Porteus was instructed by Chief Gaster to go to a house at No. 1210 Saratoga Street, and search it for the fugitive murderer, Robert Charles. A private "tip" had been received at the headquarters that the fiend was hiding somewhere on the premises.

Sergeant Porteus took with him Corporal John R. Lally and Officers Zeigel and Essey. The house to which they were directed is a small, double frame cottage, standing flush with Saratoga Street, near the corner of Clio. It has two street entrances and two rooms on each side, one in front and one in the rear. It belongs to the type of cheap little dwellings commonly tenanted by Negroes.

Sergeant Porteus left Ziegel and Essey to guard the outside and went with Corporal Lally to the rear house, where he found Jackson and his wife in the large room on the left. What immediately ensued is only known by the Negroes. They say the sergeant began to question them about their lodgers and finally asked them whether they knew anything about Robert Charles. They strenuously denied all knowledge of his whereabouts.

The Negroes lied. At that very moment the hunted and desperate murderer lay concealed not a dozen feet away. Near the rear, left-hand corner of the room is a closet or pantry, about three feet deep, and perhaps eight feet long. The door was open and Charles was crouching, Winchester in hand, in the dark further end.

Near the closet door was a bucket of water, and Jackson says that Sergeant Porteus walked toward it to get a drink. At the next moment a shot rang out and the brave officer fell dead. Lally was shot directly afterward. Exactly how and where will never be known, but the probabilities are that the black fiend sent a bullet into him before he recovered from his surprise at the sudden onslaught. Then the murderer dashed out of the back door and disappeared.

The neighborhood was already agog with the tragic events of the two preceding days, and the sound of the shots was a signal for wild and instant excitement. In a few moments a crowd had gathered and people were pouring in by the hundred from every point of the compass. Jackson and his wife had fled and at first nobody knew what had happened, but the surmise that Charles had recommenced his bloody work was on every tongue and soon some of the bolder found their way to the house in the rear. There the bleeding forms of the two policemen told the story.

Lally was still breathing, and a priest was sent for to administer the last rites. Father Fitzgerald responded, and while he was bending over the dying man the outside throng was rushing wildly through the surrounding yards and passageways searching for the murderer. "Where is he?" "What has become of him?" were the questions on every lip.

Suddenly the answer came in a shot from the room directly overhead. It was fired through a window facing Saratoga Street, and the bullet struck down a young man named Alfred J. Bloomfield, who was standing in the narrow passage-way between the two houses. He fell on his knees and a second bullet stretched him dead.

When he fled from the closet Charles took refuge in the upper story of the house. There are four windows on that floor, two facing toward Saratoga Street and two toward Rampart. The murderer kicked several breaches in the frail central partition, so he could rush from side to side, and like a trapped beast, prepared to make his last stand.

Nobody had dreamed that he was still in the house, and when Bloomfield was shot there was a headlong stampede. It was some minutes before the exact situation was understood. Then rifles and pistols began to speak, and a hail of bullets poured against the blind frontage of the old house. Every one hunted some coign of vantage, and many climbed to adjacent roofs. Soon the glass of the four upper windows was shattered by flying lead. The fusillade sounded like a battle, and the excitement upon the streets was indescribable.

Throughout all this hideous uproar Charles seems to have retained a certain diabolical coolness. He kept himself mostly out of sight, but now and then he thrust the gleaming barrel of his rifle through one of the shattered window panes and fired at his besiegers. He worked the weapon with incredible rapidity, discharging from three to five cartridges each time before leaping back to a place of safety. These replies came from all four windows indiscriminately, and showed that he was keeping a close watch in every direction. His wonderful marksmanship never failed him for a moment, and when he missed it was always by the narrowest margin only.

On the Rampart Street side of the house there are several sheds, commanding an excellent range of the upper story. Detective Littleton, Andrew Van Kuren of the Workhouse force and several others climbed upon one of these and opened fire on the upper windows, shooting whenever they could catch a glimpse of the assassin. Charles responded with his rifle, and presently Van Kuren climbed down to find a better position. He was crossing the end of the shed when he was killed.

Another of Charles's bullets found its billet in the body of Frank Evans, an ex-member of the police force. He was on the Rampart Street side firing whenever he had an opportunity. Officer J.W. Bofill and A.S.

Leclerc were also wounded in the fusillade.

While the events thus briefly outlined were transpiring time was a-wing, and the cooler headed in the crowd began to realize that some quick and desperate expedient must be adopted to insure the capture of the fiend and to avert what might be a still greater tragedy than any yet enacted. For nearly two hours the desperate monster had held his besiegers at bay, darkness would soon be at hand and no one could predict what might occur if he made a dash for liberty in the dark.

At this critical juncture it was suggested that the house be fired. The plan came as an inspiration, and was adopted as the only solution of the situation. The wretched old rookery counted for nothing against the possible continued sacrifice of human life, and steps were immediately taken to apply the torch. The fire department had been summoned to the scene soon after the shooting began; its officers were warned to be ready to prevent a spread of the conflagration, and several men rushed into the lower right-hand room and started a blaze in one corner.

They first fired an old mattress, and soon smoke was pouring out in dense volumes. It filled the interior of the ramshackle structure, and it was evident that the upper story would soon become untenable. An interval of tense excitement followed, and all eyes were strained for a glimpse of the murderer when he emerged.

Then came the thrilling climax. Smoked out of his den, the desperate fiend descended the stairs and entered the lower room. Some say he dashed into the yard, glaring around vainly for some avenue of escape; but, however that may be, he was soon a few moments later moving about behind the lower windows. A dozen shots were sent through the wall in the hope of reaching him, but he escaped unscathed. Then suddenly the door on the right was flung open and he dashed out. With head lowered and rifle raised ready to fire on the instant, Charles dashed straight for the rear door of the front cottage. To reach it he had to traverse a little walk shaded by a vineclad arbor. In the back room, with a cocked revolver in his hand, was Dr. C.A. Noiret, a young medical student, who was aiding the citizens' posse. As he sprang through the door Charles fired a shot, and the bullet whizzed past the doctor's head. Before it could be repeated Noiret's pistol cracked and the murderer reeled, turned half around and fell on his back. The doctor sent another ball into his body as he struck the floor, and half a dozen men, swarming into the room from the front, riddled the corpse with bullets.

Private Adolph Anderson of the Connell Rifles was the first man to announce the death of the wretch. He rushed to the street door, shouted the news to the crowd, and a moment later the bleeding body was dragged to the pavement and made the target of a score of pistols. It was shot, kicked and beaten almost out of semblance to humanity....

The limp dead body was dropped at the edge of the sidewalk and from there dragged to the muddy roadway by half a hundred hands. There in the road more shots were fired into the body. Corporal Trenchard, a brother-in-law of Porteus, led the shooting into the inanimate clay. With each shot there was a cheer for the work that had been done and curses and imprecations on the inanimate mass of riddled flesh that was once Robert Charles.

Cries of "Burn him! Burn him!" were heard from Clio Street all the way to Erato Street, and it was with difficulty that the crowd was restrained from totally destroying the wretched dead body. Some of those who agitated burning even secured a large vessel of kerosene, which had previously been brought to the scene for the purpose of firing Charles's refuge, and for a time it looked as though this vengeance might be wreaked on the body. The officers, however, restrained this move, although they were powerless to prevent the stamping and kicking of the body by the enraged crowd.

After the infuriated citizens had vented their spleen on the body of the dead Negro it was loaded into the patrol wagon. The police raised the body of the heavy black from the ground and literally chucked it into the space on the floor of the wagon between the seats. They threw it with a curse hissed more than uttered and born of the bitterness which was rankling in their breasts at the thought of Charles having taken so wantonly the lives of four of the best of their fellow-officers.

When the murderer's body landed in the wagon it fell in such a position that the hideously mutilated head, kicked, stamped and crushed, hung over the end.

As the wagon moved off, the followers, who were protesting against its being carried off, declaring that it should be burned, poked and struck it with sticks, beating it into such a condition that it was utterly impossible to tell what the man ever looked like.

As the patrol wagon rushed through the rough street, jerking and swaying from one side of the thoroughfare to the other, the gory, mud-smearred head swayed and swung and jerked about in a sickening manner, the dark blood dripping on the steps and spattering the body of the wagon and the trousers of the policemen standing on the step.

3 poems from from: *Fifty years & Other Poems*
Author: James Weldon Johnson
Release Date: March 1, 2006 [EBook #17884]

FIFTY YEARS

1863-1913

O brothers mine, to-day we stand
Where half a century sweeps our ken,
Since God, through Lincoln's ready hand,
Struck off our bonds and made us men.

Just fifty years--a winter's day--
As runs the history of a race;
Yet, as we look back o'er the way,
How distant seems our starting place!

Look farther back! Three centuries!
To where a naked, shivering score,
Snatched from their haunts across the seas,
Stood, wild-eyed, on Virginia's shore.

Far, far the way that we have trod,
From heathen kraals and jungle dens,
To freedmen, freemen, sons of God,
Americans and Citizens.

A part of His unknown design,
We've lived within a mighty age;
And we have helped to write a line
On history's most wondrous page.

A few black bondmen strewn along
The borders of our eastern coast,
Now grown a race, ten million strong,
An upward, onward marching host.

Then let us here erect a stone,
To mark the place, to mark the time;
A witness to God's mercies shown,
A pledge to hold this day sublime.

And let that stone an altar be,
Whereon thanksgivings we may lay,
Where we, in deep humility,
For faith and strength renewed may pray.

With open hearts ask from above
New zeal, new courage and new pow'rs,
That we may grow more worthy of
This country and this land of ours.

For never let the thought arise
That we are here on sufferance bare;
Outcasts, asylumed 'neath these skies,
And aliens without part or share.

This land is ours by right of birth,
This land is ours by right of toil;
We helped to turn its virgin earth,
Our sweat is in its fruitful soil.

Where once the tangled forest stood,--
Where flourished once rank weed and thorn,--
Behold the path-traced, peaceful wood,
The cotton white, the yellow corn.

To gain these fruits that have been earned,
To hold these fields that have been won,
Our arms have strained, our backs have burned,
Bent bare beneath a ruthless sun.

That Banner which is now the type
Of victory on field and flood--
Remember, its first crimson stripe
Was dyed by Attucks' willing blood.

And never yet has come the cry--
When that fair flag has been assailed--
For men to do, for men to die,
That have we faltered or have failed.

We've helped to bear it, rent and torn,
Through many a hot-breath'd battle breeze;
Held in our hands, it has been borne
And planted far across the seas.

And never yet--O haughty Land,
Let us, at least, for this be praised--
Has one black, treason-guided hand
Ever against that flag been raised.

Then should we speak but servile words,
Or shall we hang our heads in shame?
Stand back of new-come foreign hordes,

And fear our heritage to claim?

No! stand erect and without fear,
And for our foes let this suffice--
We've bought a rightful sonship here,
And we have more than paid the price.

And yet, my brothers, well I know
The tethered feet, the pinioned wings,
The spirit bowed beneath the blow,
The heart grown faint from wounds and stings;

The staggering force of brutish might,
That strikes and leaves us stunned and daezd;
The long, vain waiting through the night
To hear some voice for justice raised.

Full well I know the hour when hope
Sinks dead, and 'round us everywhere
Hangs stifling darkness, and we grope
With hands uplifted in despair.

Courage! Look out, beyond, and see
The far horizon's beckoning span!
Faith in your God-known destiny!
We are a part of some great plan.

Because the tongues of Garrison
And Phillips now are cold in death,
Think you their work can be undone?
Or quenched the fires lit by their breath?

Think you that John Brown's spirit stops?
That Lovejoy was but idly slain?
Or do you think those precious drops
From Lincoln's heart were shed in vain?

That for which millions prayed and sighed,
That for which tens of thousands fought,
For which so many freely died,
God cannot let it come to naught.

"LAZY"

Some men enjoy the constant strife
Of days with work and worry rife,
But that is not my dream of life:

 I think such men are crazy.
For me, a life with worries few,
A job of nothing much to do,
Just pelf enough to see me through:
 I fear that I am lazy.

On winter mornings cold and drear,
When six o'clock alarms I hear,
'Tis then I love to shift my ear,
 And hug my downy pillows.
When in the shade it's ninety-three,
No job in town looks good to me,
I'd rather loaf down by the sea,
 And watch the foaming billows.

Some people think the world's a school,
Where labor is the only rule;
But I'll not make myself a mule,
 And don't you ever doubt it.
I know that work may have its use,
But still I feel that's no excuse
For turning it into abuse;
 What do you think about it?

Let others fume and sweat and boil,
And scratch and dig for golden spoil,
 And live the life of work and toil,
Their lives to labor giving.
But what is gold when life is sped,
And life is short, as has been said,
And we are such a long time dead,
 I'll spend my life in living.

NOBODY'S LOOKIN' BUT DE OWL AND DE MOON

(_A Negro Serenade_)

De river is a-glistenin' in de moonlight,
De owl is set'n high up in de tree;
De little stars am twinklin' wid a sof' light,
De night seems only jes fu' you an' me.
Thoo de trees de breezes am a-sighin',
Breathin' out a sort o' lover's croon,
Der's nobody lookin' or a-spyin',
Nobody but de owl an' de moon.

Nobody's lookin' but de owl an' de moon,
An' de night is balmy; fu' de month is June;
Come den, Honey, won't you? Come to meet me soon,
Wile nobody's lookin' but de owl an' de moon.

I feel so kinder lonely all de daytime,
It seems I raly don't know what to do;
I jes keep sort a-longin' fu' de night-time,
'Cause den I know dat I can be wid you.
An' de thought jes sets my brain a-swayin',
An' my heart a-beatin' to a tune;
Come, de owl won't tell w'at we's a-sayin',
An' cose you know we kin trus' de moon.

LAWING AND JAWING

by Zora *[Handwritten: (Neale)] Hurston
from

Title: Three Plays

Lawing and Jawing; Forty Yards; Woofing

Author: Zora Neale Hurston

Release Date: November 29, 2005 [Project Gutenberg eBook #17187]

TIME: Present

PLACE: Way cross Georgia

SCENE: Judge Dunfomy's Court.

PERSONS: Judge Dunfomy, Officer Simpson and another, Jemima Flapcakes, Cliff Mullins, John Barnes, two lawyers, a clerk, a pretty girl and her escort.

SETTING: Usual court-room arrangement, except that there is a large red arrow pointing off-stage left, marked "To Jail."

ACTION: At rise everybody is in place except the Judge. Suddenly the CLERK looks off-stage right and motions for everybody to rise. Enter the JUDGE. He wears a black cap and gown and has his gavel in his hand. The two POLICEMEN walk behind him holding up his gown. He mounts the bench and glares all about him before he seats himself. There is a PRETTY GIRL in the front row left, and he takes a good look at her, smiles, frowns at her escort. He motions the police to leave him and take their places with the spectators and he then raps vigorously with his gavel for order.

JUDGE

Hear! Hear! Court is set! My honor is on de bench. You moufy folks set up!

(He glares at the boy with the pretty girl)

All right, Mr. Whistle-bitches, just keep up dat jawing now and see how much time I'll give you!

BOY

I wasn't talking, your honor.

JUDGE

Well, quit looking so moufy.

(to CLERK)

Call de first case. And I warn each and all dat my honor is in bad humor dis mawnin'. I'd give a canary bird twenty years for peckin' at a elephant.

(to CLERK)

Bring 'em on.

CLERK

(Reading)

Cliff Mullins, charged with assault upon his wife with a weapon and disturbing the peace.

(As CLIFF is led to the bar by the officer, the JUDGE glares ferociously at the prisoner. His wife, all bandages, limps up to the bar at the same time.)

JUDGE

So youse one of dese hard-boiled wife-beaters, huh? Just a mean old woman-Jessie! If I don't lay a hearing on you, God's a gopher! Now what _made_ you cut such a caper?

CLIFF

Judge, I didn't go hunt her. Saturday night I was down on Dearborn Street in a nasty ditch *[Handwritten: nasty ditch crossed out in pencil, (buffet flat)]--

JUDGE

A nasty ditch? *[Handwritten: A nasty ditch crossed out in pencil, (Buffet flat)]

CLIFF

Aw, at Emma Hayles' house.

JUDGE

Oh, yes. Go on.

CLIFF

Well,

(Points thumb at wife)

she come down dere and claim I took her money and she claimed I wuz spending it on Emma.

CLIFF'S WIFE

And dat's just whut he was doing, too, Judge.

CLIFF

AW, she's tellin' a great big ole Georgia lie, Judge. I wasn't spendin' no money of her'n.

WOMAN

Yes he was, Judge. There wasn't no money for him to git _but_ mine. He ain't hit a lick of work since God been to Macon. Know whut he 'lowed when I worry him 'bout workin'? Says he wouldn't take a job wid de Careless Love Lumber Company, puttin' out whut make you do me lak you do, do, do.

JUDGE

So, you goes for a sweet-back, do you?

CLIFF

Naw suh, Judge. I'd be glad to work if I could find a job.

JUDGE

How long you been outa work?

CLIFF

Seventeen years--

JUDGE

Seventeen years?

(to woman)

You been takin' keer of dis man for seventeen years?

WOMAN

Naw, but he been so mean to me, it seems lak seventeen years.

JUDGE

Now you tell me just where he hurt you.

WOMAN

Judge, tell you de truth, I'm hurt all over.

(Rubs her buttocks)

Fact is I'm cut.

JUDGE

Did you git cut in de fracas?

WOMAN

(feeling the back of her left thigh
below her buttocks)

Not in de fracas, Judge--just below it.

(She starts to show the JUDGE where
she has been cut. He motions to stop
her.)

JUDGE

Stop!

(to Officer Simpson)

Grab him. Put him in de shade.

CLIFF

Judge, I'm unguilty! I ain't laid de weight of my hand on her in malice.

You got me 'cused of murder and I ain't harmed a child.

JUDGE

Lemme ast you something. Didn't you know dat all de women in dis town
belongs to me? Beat my women and I'll stuff you in jail. 90 years. Take
'im away.

(CLIFF is led off to jail. JUDGE looks
angrily at the boy who is holding
hands with the pretty girl)

You runs me hot and I'm just dyin' to sit on yo' case.

Whut you in here for?

BOY

Nothin'.

JUDGE

Well, whut you doin' in my court, you gater-faced rascal?

BOY

My girl wanted to see whut was goin' on, so I brought her in.

JUDGE

Oh yeah!

(Smiles at GIRL)

She was usin' good sense to come see whut I'm doin', but how come you come in here? You gointer have a hard time gittin' out.

BOY

I ain't done a thing. I ain't never done nothin'. I'm just as clean as a fish, and he been bathin' all his life.

JUDGE

You ain't done nothin', hunh? Well den youse guilty of vacancy. Grab 'im, Simpson, and search 'im--and if he got any concealed weapons, I'm gointer give 'im life-time and eight years mo'.

(The OFFICER seizes the boy and frisks him. All he finds is a new deck of cards. The JUDGE looks at them in triumph.)

Unh hunh! I knowed it, one of dese skin game jelly-beans. Robbin' hard workin' men out they money.

BOY

Judge, I ain't used 'em at all. See, dey's brand new.

JUDGE

Well, den youse charged wid totin' concealed cards and attempt to gamble. Ten years at hard labor. Put him in de dark, Simpson, and throw de key away.

(He looks at the girl and beams.)

Don't you worry bout how you gointer git home. You gointer be took home right, 'cause I'm gointer take you myself. Bring on de next one, clerk.

CLERK

Jemima Flap-Cakes, charged with illegal possession and sale of alcoholic liquors.

JUDGE

(She is a fat, black, belligerent
looking woman. JUDGE looks coldly at
her.)

Well, you heard whut he said. Is you guilty or unguilty? And I'm tellin'
you right now dat you come up befo' _me_ it's just like youse in church.
You better have a strong determination, and you better tell a good
experience.

JEMIMA

(Arms akimbo)

Yes, I sold it and I'll sell it again.

(snaps fingers and shakes hips)

How does ole booze-selling mama talk?

JUDGE

Yes, five thousand dollars and ten years in jail.

(Snaps fingers and shakes hips)

How does ole heavy fining papa talk?

(She is led away, shouting and
weeping)

CLERK

De Otis Blunt, charged wid stealin' a mule.

(LAWYER arises and comes forward with
the prisoner)

LAWYER

You can't convict this man. I'm here to represent him.

JUDGE

Yo' mouf might spout lak a coffee pot but I got a lawyer

(Looks at other lawyer)

dat kin beat your segastuatin'.

(Looks admiring at girl)

How am I chewin' my dictionary and minglin' my alphabets?

LAWYER

Well, I kin try, can't I?

JUDGE

Oh yeah, you kin try, but I kin see right now where he's gointer git all de time dat God ever made dat ain't been used already. From now on.

(To LAWYER)

Go 'head, and spread yo' lungs all over Georgy, but he's goin' to jail!
Mules must be respected.

LAWYER

(Striking a pose at the bar)

Your Honor,

(Looks at the pretty girl)

Ladies and Gentlemen--

JUDGE

Never mind 'bout dat lady. You talk yo' chat to me.

LAWYER

This is a clear case of syllogism! Again I say syllogism. My client is innocent because it was a dark night when they say he stole the mule and that's against all laws of syllogism.

(JUDGE looks impressed and laughs)

JUDGE

Dat ole fool do know somethin' 'bout law.

LAWYER

When George Washington was pleading de case of Marbury vs. Madison, what did he say? What did he say? Scintillate, scintillate, Globule orific. Fain would I fathom thy nature's specific. Loftily poised in ether capacious, strongly resembling a gem carbonacious. What did Abraham Lincoln say about mule-stealing? When torrid Phoebus refuses his presence and ceases to lamp with fierce incandescence, then you illumine the regions supernal, scintillate, scintillate, semper nocturnal. Syllogism, again I say syllogism.

(He takes his seat amid applause)

JUDGE

Man, youse a pleadin' fool. You knows yo' rules and by-laws.

OTHER LAWYER

Let me show my glory. Let me spread my habeas corpus.

JUDGE

'Tain't no use. Dis lawyer done convinced me.

OTHER LAWYER

But, lemme parade my material--

JUDGE

Parade yo' material anywhere you wants to exceptin' befo' me. Dis lil girl wants to go home and I'm goin' with her and enjoy de consequences. Court's adjourned.

CURTAIN

HERE COMES A YOUNG MAN COURTING

from Negro Folk Rhymes

Wise and Otherwise: With a Study

Author: Thomas W. Talley

Release Date: November 7, 2008 [EBook #27195]

Here comes a young man a courtin'! Courtin'! Courtin'!
Here comes a young man a-courtin'! It's Tidlum Tidelum Day.
"Say! Won't you have one o' us? Us, Sir? Us, Sir?
Say! Won't you have one o' us, Sir?" dem brown skin ladies say.

"You is too black an' rusty! Rusty! Rusty!
You is too black an' rusty!" said Tidlum Tidelum Day.
"We hain't no blacker 'an you, Sir! You, Sir! You, Sir!
We hain't no blacker 'an you, Sir!" dem brown skin ladies say.

"Pray! Won't you have one o' us, Sir? Us, Sir? Us, Sir?
Pray! Won't you have one o' us, Sir?" say yaller gals all gay.
"You is too ragged an' dirty! Dirty! Dirty!
You is too ragged an' dirty!" said Tidlum Tidelum Day.

"You shore is got de bighead! Bighead! Bighead!
You shore is got de bighead! You needn' come dis way.
We's good enough fer you, Sir! You, Sir! You, Sir!
We's good enough fer you, Sir!" dem yaller gals all say.

"De fairest one dat I can see, dat I can see, dat I can see,
De fairest one dat I can see," said Tidlum Tidelum Day.
"My Lulu, come an' wa'k wid me, wa'k wid me, wa'k wid me.
My Lulu, come an' wa'k wid me. 'Miss Tidlum Tidelum Day.'"

Excerpt from *Henry Ossian Flipper, The Colored Cadet at West Point*
by Henry Ossian Flipper
December, 2000 [Etext #2448]

CHAPTER III.

REPORTING.

MAY 20th, 1873! Auspicious day! From the deck of the little ferry-boat that steamed its way across from Garrison's on that eventful afternoon I viewed the hills about West Point, her stone structures perched thereon, thus rising still higher, as if providing access to the very pinnacle of fame, and shuddered. With my mind full of the horrors of the treatment of all former cadets of color, and the dread of inevitable ostracism, I approached tremblingly yet confidently.

The little vessel having been moored, I stepped ashore and inquired of a soldier there where candidates should report. He very kindly gave me all needed information, wished me much success, for which I thanked him, and set out for the designated place. I soon reached it, and walked directly into the adjutant's office. He received me kindly, asked for my certificate of appointment, and receiving that--or assurance that I had it: I do not now remember which--directed me to write in a book there for the purpose the name and occupation of my father, the State, Congressional district, county and city of his residence, my own full name, age, State, county, and place of my birth, and my occupation when at home. This done I was sent in charge of an orderly to cadet barracks, where my "plebe quarters" were assigned me.

The impression made upon me by what I saw while going from the adjutant's office to barracks was certainly not very encouraging. The rear windows were crowded with cadets watching my unpretending passage of the area of barracks with apparently as much astonishment and interest as they would, perhaps, have watched Hannibal crossing the Alps. Their words, jeers, etc., were most insulting.

Having reached another office, I was shown in by the orderly. I walked in, hat in hand--nay, rather

started in-- when three cadets, who were seated in the room, simultaneously sprang to their feet, and welcomed me somewhat after this fashion:

"Well, sir, what do you mean by coming into this office in that manner, sir? Get out of here, sir."

I walked out, followed by one of them, who, in a similar strain, ordered me to button my coat, get my hands around--"fins" he said--heels together, and head up.

"Now, sir," said he, leaving me, "when you are ready to come in, knock at that door," emphasizing the word "knock."

The door was open. I knocked. He replied, "Come in." I went in. I took my position in front of and facing him, my heels together, head up, the palms of my hands to the front, and my little fingers on the seams of my pantaloons, in which position we habitually carried them. After correcting my position and making it sufficiently military to suit himself, one of them, in a much milder tone, asked what I desired of them. I told him I had been sent by the adjutant to report there. He arose, and directing me to follow him, conducted me to the bath-rooms. Having discharged the necessary duty there, I returned and was again put in charge of the orderly, who carried me to the hospital. There I was subjected to a rigid physical examination, which I "stood" with the greatest ease. I was given a certificate of ability by the surgeon, and by him sent again to the adjutant, who in turn sent me to the treasurer. From him I returned alone to barracks.

The reception given to "plebes" upon reporting is often very much more severe than that given me. Even members of my own class can testify to this. This reception has, however, I think, been best described in an anonymous work, where it is thus set forth:

"How dare you come into the presence of your superior officer in that grossly careless and unmilitary manner? I'll have you imprisoned. Stand, attention, sir!" (Even louder than before.) "Heels-together-and-on- the-same-line, toes-equally -turned-out, little-fingers-on-the-seams-of-your-

pantaloons, button-your-coat, draw-in-your-chin, throw-out-your-chest, cast-your-eyes-fifteen-paces-to-the-front, don't-let-me-see-you-wearing-standing-collars-again. Stand-steady, sir. You've evidently mistaken your profession, sir. In any other service, or at the seat of war, sir, you would have been shot, sir, without trial, sir, for such conduct, sir."

The effect of such words can be easily imagined. A "plebe" will at once recognize the necessity for absolute obedience, even if he does know all this is hazing, and that it is doubtless forbidden. Still "plebes" almost invariably tremble while it lasts, and when in their own quarters laugh over it, and even practise it upon each other for mutual amusement.

On the way to barracks I met the squad of "beasts" marching to dinner. I was ordered to fall in, did so, marched to the mess hall, and ate my first dinner at West Point. After dinner we were marched again to barracks and dismissed. I hastened to my quarters, and a short while after was turned out to take possession of my baggage. I lugged it to my room, was shown the directions on the back of the door for arrangement of articles, and ordered to obey them within half an hour. The parts of the regulations referred to are the following:

SPECIAL REGULATIONS FOR BARRACKS.

ORDERLIES OF ROOMS.

The particular attention of Orderlies is directed to those paragraphs of the Regulations for the U. S. Military Academy specifying their duties.

CADETS.

The hours of Recitation of each Cadet will be posted on the back of the door of his room. When a room is being washed out by the policeman, on reporting to the Officer of the Day, and stating to him the number of some room in his own Division he wishes to visit, a Cadet will be permitted to visit that particular room until his own can be occupied. The uniform coat will be worn from 8 till 10 A.M.; at Inspection before 10 A.M. the coat will be buttoned throughout; at Sunday

Morning Inspection gloves and side-arms will also be worn. After 10 A.M. any uniform garment or dressing-gown may be worn in their own rooms, but at no time will Cadets be in their shirt-sleeves unnecessarily. During the "Call to Quarters," between "Inspection Call" in the morning and "Tattoo," the following Arrangement of Furniture, etc., will be required:

ACCOUTREMENTS.

Dress Cap--On gun-rack shelf.

Cartridge Boxes, Waist Belts, Sabres, Forage Caps
--Hung on pegs near gun-rack shelf.

Muskets--In gun--rack, Bayonets in the scabbards.

Spurs--Hung on peg with Sabres.

BEDSTEADS AND BEDDING.

Bedsteads--In alcove, against side wall of the room, the head against the back wall.

Bedding--Mattress to be folded once; Blankets and Comforters, each one to be neatly and separately folded, so that the folds shall be of the width of an ordinary pillow, and piled at the head of the BEDSTEAD in the following order, viz.: MATTRESS, SHEETS, PILLOWS, BLANKETS, and COMFORTERS, the front edge of sheets, pillows, etc., to be vertical. On Sunday afternoons the BEDS may be made down and used.

CLOTHES-PRESS.

Books--On the top of the Press, against the wall, and with the backs to the front. BRUSHES (tooth and hair), COMBS, SHAVING IMPLEMENTS and MATERIALS, such small boxes as may be allowed, vials, etc., to be neatly arranged on the upper shelf. BELTS, COLLARS, GLOVES, HANDKERCHIEFS, SOCKS, etc., to be neatly arranged on the second shelf from the top. SHEETS, PILLOW-CASES, SHIRTS, DRAWERS, WHITE PANTS, etc., to be neatly arranged on the other shelves, the heaviest articles on the lower shelves.

Arrangement--All articles of the same kind are to

be carefully and neatly placed in separate piles. The folded edges of these articles to be to the front, and even with the front edge of the shelf. Nothing will be allowed between these piles of clothing and the back of the press, unless the want of room on the front edge renders it necessary.

Dirty Clothes--To be kept in clothes-bag.

Shoes and Over-Shoes--To be kept clean, dusted, and arranged in a line where they can be seen by the Inspector, either at the foot of the bedstead or at the side near the foot.

Woollen Clothing, Dressing-Gown, and Clothes-Bag--To be hung on the pegs in alcove in the following general order, from the front of the alcove to the back: Over-Coat, Dressing-Gown, Uniform Coats, Jackets, Pants, Clothes-Bag.

FURNITURE.

Broom--To be kept behind the door. TIN BOX for CLEANING MATERIALS--To be kept clean and in the fire-place. SPITTOON-- To be kept on one side of the hearth near mantel-piece. CHAIRS and TABLES--On no occasion to be in alcoves, the chairs, when not in use, to be against the owners' tables. LOOKING-GLASS--At the centre of the mantel-piece. WASH-STAND--To be kept clean, in front and against alcove partition. WASH-BASIN--To be kept clean, and inverted on the top of the Wash-stand. WATER-BUCKET --To be kept on shelf of wash-stand. SLOP-BUCKET--To be kept near to and on side of Wash-stand, opposite door. Baskets, Pictures, Clocks, Statues, Trunks, and large Boxes will NOT be allowed in quarters.

Curtains--WINDOW-CURTAINS--Only uniform allowed, and to be kept drawn back during the day. ALCOVE--CURTAINS--Only uniform allowed, and to be kept drawn, except between "Tattoo" and "Reveille" and when dressing. CURTAINS OF CLOTHES-PRESS--To be kept drawn, except when policing room.

FLOOR.

To be kept clean, and free from grease-spots and stains.

WALLS AND WOOD-WORK.

To be kept free from cobwebs, and not to be injured by nails or otherwise.

HEATING APPARATUS, SCREEN AND TOP.

To be kept clean, and not to be scratched or defaced.

These Regulations will be strictly obeyed and enforced.

By order of LIEUT.-COLONEL UPTON,
GEORGE L. TURNER,
Cadet Lieut. and Adjutant.

HEADQUARTERS, CORPS OF CADETS,
West Point, N. Y., Sept. 4, 1873.

At the end of the time specified every article was arranged and the cadet corporal returned to inspect. He walked deliberately to the clothes-press, and, informing me that every thing was arranged wrong, threw every article upon the floor, repeated his order, and withdrew. And thus three times in less than two hours did I arrange and he disarrange my effects. I was not troubled again by him till after supper, when he inspected again, merely opening the door, however, and looking in. He told me I could not go to sleep till "tattoo." Now tattoo, as he evidently used it, referred in some manner to time, and with such reference I had not the remotest idea of what it meant. I had no knowledge whatever of military terms or customs. However, as I was also told that I could do any thing--writing, etc.--I might wish to do, I found sufficient to keep me awake until he again returned and told me it was then tattoo, that I could retire then or at any time within half an hour, and that at the end of that time the light must be extinguished and I must be in bed. I instantly extinguished it and retired.

Thus passed my first half day at West Point, and thus began the military career of the fifth colored cadet. The other four were Smith of South Carolina, Napier of Tennessee, Howard of Mississippi, and Gibbs of Florida.

What I had seen and experienced during the few hours from my arrival till tattoo filled me with fear and apprehension. I expected every moment to be insulted or struck, and was not long in persuading myself that the various reports which I had heard concerning Smith were true--I had not seen him yet, or, if I had, had not recognized him--and that my life there was to be all torture and anguish. I was uneasy and miserable, ever thinking of the regulations, verbal or written, which had been given me. How they haunted me! I kept repeating them over and over, fearful lest I might forget and violate them, and be dismissed. If I wanted any thing or wished to go anywhere, I must get permission of the cadet officers on duty over us. To get such permission I must enter their office cleanly and neatly dressed, and, taking my place in the centre of the room, must salute, report my entrance, make known my wants, salute again, and report my departure.* At the instant I heard the sound of a drum I must turn out at a run and take my place in the ranks.

*Somewhat after this fashion:

"Candidate F----, United States Military Academy, reports his entrance into this office, sir."

"Well, sir, what do you want in this office?"

"I desire permission, sir, to walk on public lands till retreat."

"No, sir, you can't walk on public lands till retreat. Get out of my sight."

"Candidate F----, United States Military Academy, reports his departure from this office, sir."

At five o'clock the next morning two unusual sounds greeted my ears--the reveille, and a voice in the hall below calling out in a loud martial tone:

"Candidates, turn out promptly!" In an astonishingly short time I had dressed, "turned out," and was in ranks. We stood there as motionless as statues till the fifers and drummers had marched up to barracks, the rolls of the companies had been called, and they themselves dismissed. We were then dismissed, our roll having been also called. We withdrew at a run to our quarters and got them ready for inspection, which, we were informed, would take place at the expiration of half an hour. At the end of this time our quarters were inspected by a corporal. In my own room he upset my bedding, kicked my shoes into the

middle of the room, and ordered me to arrange them again and in better order. This order was obeyed immediately. And this upsetting was done in every room, as I learned afterward from the occupants, who, strange to say, manifested no prejudice then. 'Twas not long ere they learned that they were prejudiced, and that they abhorred even the sight of a "d--d nigger."

Just before, or perhaps just after breakfast, our quarters were again inspected. This time I was somewhat surprised to hear the corporal say, "Very well, Mr. Flipper, very well, sir."

And this with other things shows there was a friendly feeling toward me from the first. After having thus expressed himself, he directed me to print my name on each of four pieces of paper, and to tack them up in certain places in the room, which he indicated to me. I did this several times before I could please him; but at last succeeded. Another corporal visited me during the day and declared everything out of order, although I had not touched a single thing after once satisfying the first corporal. Of course I had to rearrange them to suit him, in which I also finally succeeded.

At eleven o'clock the mail came. I received a letter, and to my astonishment its postmark was "West Point, N. Y., May 21st." Of course I was at a loss to know who the writer was. I turned it over and over, looked at it, studied the postmark, finally opened it and read it.*

*This letter by some means has been misplaced, and all efforts to find it, or to discover what its exact contents were, have failed. However, it was from James Webster Smith, the first and then only cadet of color at West Point. It reassured me very much, telling me not to fear either blows or insults, and advising me to avoid any forward conduct if I wished also to avoid certain consequences, "which," said the writer, "I have learned from sad experience," would be otherwise inevitable. It was a sad letter. I don't think any thing has so affected me or so influenced my conduct at West Point as its melancholy tone. That "sad experience" gave me a world of warning. I looked upon it as implying the confession of some great error made by him at some previous time, and of its sadder consequences.

This was another surprise--a welcome surprise, however. I read it over several times. It showed me plainly that Smith had not been dismissed, as had been reported to me at home. I at once formed a better opinion of West Point than I before had, and from that day my fears gradually wore away.

The candidates now reported rapidly, and we, who had reported the day previous, were comparatively undisturbed. At four o'clock I visited Smith at his quarters by permission. My visit was necessarily a short one, as he was then preparing for drill. It sufficed, however, for us to become acquainted, and for me to receive some valuable advice. An hour and place were designated for us to meet next day, and I took my leave of him. The "plebes" turned out en masse, walked around the grounds and witnessed the drilling of the battalion. We enjoyed it immensely. They were that day skirmishing and using blank cartridges. We thought the drill superb. I was asked by a fellow-"plebe," "Think you'll like that?"

"Oh yes," said I, "when I can do it as easily as they do."

We had quite a lengthy conversation about the fine appearance of the cadets, their forms, so straight and manly, evoking our greatest admiration. This, alas! was our only conversation on any subject. The gentleman discovered ere long that he too was prejudiced, and thus one by one they "cut" me, whether for prudential reasons or not I can not presume to say.

I went into the office one day, and standing uncovered at about the middle of the room, in the position of the soldier, saluted and thus addressed a cadet officer present:

"Candidate Flipper, United States Military Academy, reports his entrance into this office, sir."

"Well, what do you want?" was the rather gruff reply.

"I desire permission to visit Smith, sir," answered I, thoughtlessly saying "Smith," instead of "Mr" or "Cadet Smith."

He instantly sprang from his seat into rather close proximity to my person and angrily yelled:

"Well, sir, I want to hear you say 'Mr. Smith.' I want you to understand, sir, he is a cadet and you're a 'plebe,' and I don't want to see such familiarity on your part again, sir," putting particular emphasis on "Mr."

Having thus delivered himself he resumed his seat, leaving me, I imagine, more scared than otherwise.

"What do you want?" asked he again, after a pause of a moment or so.

"Permission to visit Mr. Smith."

Without condescending to notice for the time my request he gave the interview a rather ludicrous turn, I thought, by questioning me somewhat after this manner:

"Can you dance, Mr. Flipper?"

Having answered this to his entire satisfaction, he further asked:

"Expect to attend the hops this summer?"

"Oh no, sir," replied I, smiling, as he also was, for I had just discovered the drift of his questions. After mischievously studying my countenance for a moment, he returned to the original subject and queried, "Where do you want to go?"

I told him.

"Well, get out of my sight."

I considered the permission granted, and hastily withdrew to take advantage of it.

Between breakfast and supper those of us who had been there at least a day had quite a pleasant time. We were not troubled with incessant inspections or otherwise. We either studied for examination or walked around the grounds. At or near seven o'clock, the time of retreat parade, we were

formed near our barracks and inspected. Our ranks were opened and the cadet lieutenant inspected our clothing and appearance generally. A not infrequent occurrence on these occasions was:

"Well, mister, what did you shave with--a shoehorn?"

At this we would smile, when the lieutenant, sergeant, or corporal would jump at us and yell:

"Wipe that smile off your face, sir! What do you mean, sir, by laughing in ranks?"

If any one attempted to reply he was instantly silenced with--

"Well, sir, don't reply to me in ranks."

The inspection would be continued. Some one, unable to restrain himself--the whole affair was so ridiculous--would laugh right out in ranks. He was a doomed man.

"What do you mean, sir, by laughing in ranks, sir?"

Having been once directed not to reply in ranks, the poor "plebe" would stand mute.

"Well, sir, don't you intend to answer me?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, sir, step it out. What were you grinning at?"

"Nothing, sir."

"Nothing! Well, sir, you're a pretty thing to be grinning at nothing. Get in ranks."

The inspection would, after many such interruptions, be continued. Ranks would at length be closed and the command, "In place, rest!" given. The battalion would march in from parade at double time and form in the area to our rear. The delinquencies of the day previous would then be published by the cadet adjutant.

What most strikes a "plebe" is this same publication. He hasn't the remotest idea of what it is. Not a word uttered by the adjutant is understood by him. He stands and wonders what it is. A perfect jargon of words,

unintelligible and meaningless to him! I remember distinctly how I used to wonder, and how I was laughed at when I asked for information concerning it. We "plebes" used to speak of it often, and wonder if it was not French. When we were better acquainted with the rules and customs of the Academy we learned what it was. It was something of this nature, read from the "Delinquency Book:"

DELINQUENCIES, TUESDAY, OCT. 12.

ADAMS.--Late at reveille roll-call.

BEJAY.--Sentinel not coming to "Arms, Port," when addressed by the officer of the day.

SAME.--Not conversant with orders at same.

BARNES.--Same at same.

SAME.--Sentinel, neglect of duty, not requiring cadet leaving his post to report his departure and destination.

SAME.--Hanging head, 4 P.M.

BULOW.--Dust on mantel at inspection, 9.30 A.M.

SAME.--Executing manual of arms with pointer in section-room, 9 A.M.

SAME.--Using profane expression, 1 P.M.

CULLEN.--Out of bed at taps.

DOUNS.--Light in quarters, 11 p.m.

SAME.--Not prepared on 47 Velasquez.*

*For these delinquencies the cadets are allowed to write explanations. If the offence is absence from quarters or any duty without authority, or is one committed in the Academical Department, called an Academical Delinquency, such as not being prepared on some lesson, an explanation is required and must be written. For all other offences the cadet can write an explanation or not as he chooses. If the explanation is satisfactory, the offence is removed and he gets no demerits, otherwise he does. For form of explanation see Chapter X., latter part.

On the 26th of May, another colored candidate reported. It is said he made the best show at the preliminary examination. Unfortunately, however, he was "found" at the following semi-annual examination. He was brought up to my quarters by a corporal, and I was ordered to give him all instruction which had previously been given me. This I did, and his first days at West Point were

much more pleasant than mine had been.

The candidates had now all reported, and Monday afternoon, May 28th, we were each given by the Adjutant in person a slip of paper upon which was written the number of each man's name in an alphabetically arranged roll. This we had special directions to preserve. The next day we were marched up to the Drawing Academy, and examined in grammar, history, and geography; the following day in orthography and reading. On the same day, also, we were required to write out a list of all the textbooks we had used in our previous school-days. The day following we were divided into sections and marched to the library, where the Academic Board was in readiness to examine us in mathematics. It took quite a while to examine our class of more than one hundred members thus orally. I am not positive about the dates of the examination. I know it occurred in the immediate vicinity of those named.

Not many days after this the result of the examination was made known to us. The familiar cry, "Candidates, turn out promptly," made at about noon, informed us that something unusual was about to occur. It was a fearful moment, and yet I was sure I had "passed." The only questions I failed on were in geography. I stood motionless while the order was being read until I heard my name among the accepted ones. I felt as if a great burden had been removed from my mind. It was a beginning, and if not a good one, certainly not a bad one. What has been the ending? Let the sequel show.

Now that the examination was over and the deficient ones gone, we were turned out for drill every morning at half--past five o'clock and at four in the afternoon. We were divided into squads of one each, and drilled twice a day in the "settings up" until about June 20th. After a few drills, however, the squads were consolidated into others of four, six, and eight each. The surplus drill-masters were "turned in." Their hopes were withered, for it was almost a certainty that those who were "turned in" would not be "made." They expected to be "made" on their proficiency in drilling, and when it was shown by being "turned in" that others had been thought better drill-masters, they were not a little disappointed. How they "boned"

tactics! What proficiency they manifested! How they yelled out their commands! What eagerness they showed to correct errors, etc. And yet some could not overcome their propensity for hazing, and these were of course turned in. Not always thus, however. Those who were not "turned in" were not always "made" corporals. Often those who were so treated "got the chevrons" after all.

"Plebe drill," or, more familiarly, "squad drill," has always been a source of great amusement to citizens, but what a horror to plebes. Those torturous twistings and twirlings, stretching every nerve, straining every sinew, almost twisting the joints out of place and making life one long agonizing effort. Was there ever a "plebe," or recruit, who did not hate, did not shudder at the mere mention of squad drill? I did. Others did. I remember distinctly my first experience of it. I formed an opinion, a morbid dislike of it then, and have not changed it. The benefit, however, of "squad drill" can not be overestimated. It makes the most crooked, distorted creature an erect, noble, and manly being, provided, of course, this distortion be a result of habit and not a natural deformity, the result of laziness in one's walking, such as hanging the head, dropping the shoulders, not straightening the legs, and crossing them when walking.

Squad drill is one of the painful necessities of military discipline, and no one regrets his experience of it, however displeasing it may have been at the time. It is squad drill and hazing that so successfully mould the coarser characters who come to West Point into officers and gentlemen. They teach him how to govern and be governed. They are more effectual in polishing his asperities of disposition and forming his character than any amount of regulations could be. They tame him, so to speak.

Squad drill was at once a punishment, a mode of hazing, and a drill. For the least show of grossness one was sure to be punished with "settings up, second time!" "settings up, fourth time!" "Continue the motion, settings up second (or fourth) time!" We would be kept at these motions until we could scarcely move. Of course all this was contrary to orders. The

drill-master would be careful not to be "hived."
If he saw an officer even looking at him, he would add the command "three," which caused a discontinuance of the motion. He would change, however, to one of the other exercises immediately, and thus keep the plebes continually in motion. When he thought the punishment sufficient he would discontinue it by the command, "three," and give "place, rest." When the "place, rest" had been just about sufficient to allow the plebe to get cool and in a measure rested, the drill would be resumed by the command "'tion, squad" (abbreviated from "attention" and pronounced "shun"). If the plebe was slow, "place, rest" was again given, and

"When I give the command 'tion, squad,' I want to see you spring up with life."

"'Tion, squad!"

Plebe is slow again.

"Well, mister, wake up. This is no trifling matter. Understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, sir, don't reply to me in ranks."

And many times and terms even more severe than these.

Now that Williams and myself were admitted, the newspapers made their usual comments on such occurrences. I shall quote a single one from The New National Era and Citizen, published in Washington, D.C., and the political organ of the colored people. The article, however, as I present it, is taken from another paper, having been by it taken from the Era and Citizen:

"COLORED CADETS AT WEST POINT.

"The New National Era and Citizen, which is the national organ of the colored people, contains a sensible article this week on the status of colored cadets at West Point. After referring to the colored young men, 'Plebes' Flipper of Georgia, and Williams of Virginia, who have passed the examination requisite for entering

the Academy, the Era and Citizen says: 'Now that they are in, the stiff and starched protégés of the Government make haste to tell the reporters that "none of the fellows would hurt them, but every fellow would let them alone." Our reporter seems to think that "to be let alone" a terrible doom. So it is, if one is sent to Coventry by gentlemen. So it is, if one is neglected by those who, in point of education, thrift, and morality are our equals or superiors. So it is not, if done by the low-minded, the ignorant, and the snobbish. If it be possible, among the four hundred young charity students of the Government, that Cadet Smith, for instance, finds no warm friends, and has won no respect after the gallant fight he has made for four years--a harder contest than he will ever have in the sterner field--then we despair of the material which West Point is turning out. If this be true, it is training selfish, snobbish martinets--not knightly soldiers, not Havelocks, Hardinges, and Kearneys--but the lowest type of disciplined and educated force and brutality--the Bluchers and Marlboroughs. We scarcely believe this, however, and we know that any young man, whether he be poor or black, or both, may enter any first-class college in America and find warm sympathetic friends, both among students and faculty, if he but prove himself to be possessed of some good qualities If the Smiths, Flippers, and Williamses in their honorable school-boy careers can not meet social as well as intellectual recognition while at West Point, let them study on and acquit themselves like men, for they will meet, out in the world, a worthy reception among men of worth, who have put by the prejudices of race and the shackles of ignorance. Emerson says somewhere that "Solitude, the nurse of Genius, is the foe of mediocrity." If our young men of ability have the stuff in them to make men out of, they need not fear "to be let alone" for a while; they will ultimately come to the surface and attain worthy recognition.'

"That is plain, practical talk. We like it. It has the ring of the true metal. It shows that the writer has faith in the ultimate triumph of manhood. It is another form for expressing a firm belief that real worth will find a reward. Never has any bond people emerged from slavery into a

condition full of such grand opportunities and splendid possibilities as those which are within the reach of the colored people of the United States; but if those opportunities are to be made available, if those possibilities are to be realized, the colored people must move into the fore-front of action and study and work in their own behalf. The colored cadets at West Point, the colored students in the public schools, the colored men in the professions, the trades, and on the plantations, can not be idlers if they are to compete with the white race in the acquisition of knowledge and property. But they have examples of notable achievements in their own ranks which should convince them that they have not the slightest reason to despair of success. The doors stand wide open, from the plantation to the National Capitol, and every American citizen can, if he will, attain worthy recognition."

And thus, ere we had entered upon our new duties, were we forewarned of the kind of treatment we should expect. To be "sent to Coventry," "to be let severely alone," are indeed terrible dooms, but we cared naught for them. "To be let alone" was what we wished. To be left to our own resources for study and improvement, for enjoyment in whatever way we chose to seek it, was what we desired. We cared not for social recognition. We did not expect it, nor were we disappointed in not getting it. We would not seek it. We would not obtrude ourselves upon them. We would not accept recognition unless it was made willingly. We would be of them at least independent. We would mark out for ourselves a uniform course of conduct and follow it rigidly. These were our resolutions. So long as we were in the right we knew we should be recognized by those whose views were not limited or bound by such narrow confines as prejudice and caste, whether they were at West Point or elsewhere. Confident that right on our own part would secure us just treatment from others, that "if we but prove ourselves possessed of some good qualities" we could find friends among both faculty and students.

I came to West Point, notwithstanding I had heard so much about the Academy well fit to dishearten and keep one away. And then, too, at the time I had no object in seeking the appointment other

than to gratify an ordinary ambition. Several friends were opposed to my accepting it, and even persuaded me, or rather attempted to persuade me, to give up the idea altogether. I was inexorable. I had set my mind upon West Point, and no amount of persuasion, and no number of harrowing narratives of bad treatment, could have induced me to relinquish the object I had in view. But I was right. The work I chose, and from which I could not flinch without dishonor, proved far more important than either my friends or myself at first thought it would be.

Let me not, however, anticipate. Of this importance more anon.

PERSONAL LIBERTY LAWS.

from Fugitive Slaves 1619-1865

Author: Marion Gleason McDougall

Release Date: December 7, 2010 [EBook #34594]

§ 77. Character of the personal liberty laws.

§ 78. Acts passed before the Prigg decision (1793-1842).

§ 79. Acts passed between the Prigg decision and the second Fugitive Slave Law (1842-1850).

§ 80. Acts occasioned by the law of 1850 (1850-1860).

§ 81. Massachusetts acts.

§ 82. Review of the acts by States.

§ 83. Effect of the personal liberty laws.

=§ 77. Character of the personal liberty laws.--The personal liberty laws were statutes passed in the Northern States whose object was to defeat in some measure the national Fugitive Slave Law. Often their ostensible purpose was to protect the free negroes from kidnappers, and to this end they secured for the alleged fugitive the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus, and the trial by jury. Sometimes, however, they frankly avowed their aim as a deliberate attempt to interfere with the execution of the United States statutes. In the following examination of these laws, they will be considered first chronologically, and afterward more minutely according to their subject matter. In previous chapters we have noticed many instances wherein fugitives have been befriended by individuals, or by organizations like the Antislavery Societies or the Underground Railroad. But the action of the State governments in the personal liberty bills, from the time the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793 began to be executed to the outbreak of the Civil War, showed that the dissatisfaction of the North was fundamental, and was not confined merely to the few in the van of the Antislavery movement.

=§ 78. Acts passed before the Prigg decision (1793-1842).--Although the so-called personal liberty laws were not passed until about 1840, Indiana[256] and Connecticut[257] had before that time provided that on appeal fugitives might have a trial by jury. The Connecticut law, in contrast to the hostile spirit of later legislation, was entitled, "An Act for the fulfilment of the obligation of this State imposed by the Constitution of the United States in regard to persons held to service or labor in one State escaping into another, and to secure the right of trial by jury in the cases herein mentioned." Notwithstanding this preamble, the law provided for fining State officials who might take part in fugitive slave cases.

The first definite personal liberty laws were passed by Vermont[258] and New York,[259] in 1840, and were entitled Acts "to extend the right of

trial by jury." They not only insured jury trial, but also provided attorneys to defend fugitives. This was the only law of the kind New York ever passed, and proved of little value, since it soon fell into disuse, and was almost forgotten.

=§ 79. Acts passed between the Prigg decision and the second Fugitive Slave Law (1842-1850).--After the Prigg decision in 1842, wherein it was declared that the law must be executed through national powers only, and that State authorities could not be forced into action,[260] a new class of statutes sprang up. The State legislatures seized the opportunity afforded them by Judge Story's opinion, to forbid State officers from performing the duties required of them by the law of 1793, and prohibited the use of State jails in fugitive slave cases. Such laws were passed in Massachusetts,[261] Vermont,[262] Pennsylvania,[263] and Rhode Island.[264] In 1844, Connecticut repealed her act of 1838, as being then unconstitutional, but retained the portion forbidding State officers to participate in the execution of the law.

=§ 80. Acts occasioned by the law of 1850 (1850-1860).--The provisions of the law of 1850 roused yet more opposition in the North, and before 1856 many of the States had passed personal liberty bills. The new national law avoided the employment of State officers. This change in the statute brought about a corresponding alteration in the State legislation, and we therefore find the acts of this period differing somewhat from those of earlier years. They almost invariably prohibited the use of State jails, they often forbade State judges and officers to issue writs or to give assistance to the claimant, and punished severely the seizure of a free person with the intent to reduce him to slavery.

Should an alleged fugitive be arrested, the personal liberty acts were intended to secure him a trial surrounded by the usual legal safeguards. The identity of the person claimed was to be proved by two witnesses; or they gave him the right to a writ of habeas corpus; or they enjoined upon the court to which the writ was returnable a trial by jury. At the trial the prisoner must be defended by an attorney, frequently the State or county attorney, and a penalty was provided for false testimony. Any violation of these clauses by State officers was punished by penalties varying from five hundred dollars and six months in jail, as in Pennsylvania, to the maximum punishment in Vermont, of two thousand dollars' fine and ten years in prison.

Such acts were passed in Vermont,[265] Connecticut,[266] and Rhode Island,[267] in Massachusetts,[268] Michigan,[269] and Maine.[270] Later, laws were also enacted in Wisconsin,[271] Kansas,[272] Ohio,[273] and Pennsylvania.[274] Of the other Northern States, two only, New Jersey and California, gave any official sanction to the rendition of fugitives. In New Hampshire, New York, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, and Minnesota, however,

no full personal liberty laws were passed.[275]

=§ 81. Massachusetts acts.--Let us now examine the purport of these acts in the various States. The general tenor and effect are best seen in Massachusetts, which may be selected as a typical State. In 1837, Massachusetts passed a law "to restore the trial by jury, on questions of personal freedom." This secured to the prisoner a writ of personal replevin, which was to be issued from and returnable to the Court of Common Pleas for the county in which the plaintiff was confined, and was to be issued fourteen days at least before the return day. If the prisoner were secreted, the court might send out a *capias* to take the body of the defendant. This act allowed an appeal to the Supreme Judicial Court.

In 1842, the Latimer case[276] occurred. This so aroused public sentiment that a great petition, signed by sixty-five thousand people, was sent to the legislature, asking for a new personal liberty law. On the basis of the Prigg decision, a law was enacted which forbade State magistrates to issue certificates or take cognizance of the law of 1793, and withheld the use of State jails for the imprisonment of fugitives.[277]

In 1851, in the Shadrach case,[278] there was opportunity for testing the value of this law. The fugitive was not indeed confined in any jail, but there was little difficulty in providing a place of detention, and the court-house was secured. In this year, acting upon a clause in the Governor's message, which treated of the new Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, a committee in the legislature made a report, accompanied by resolutions and a bill further to protect personal liberty; but no law was passed, and there the matter rested until 1855.[279]

After the Sims[280] and Burns[281] cases, in which the court-houses were again used in the place of jails, the heat of public indignation led to petitions to the legislature asking for a more stringent personal liberty law. A joint committee prepared a bill, which was passed, but was vetoed by Governor Gardner, who had been advised by the Attorney General that some of the clauses were unconstitutional. But so strong was the influence in its favor that it was passed over the veto by a two-thirds vote.[282] The feeling that it was probably unconstitutional, however, must have strengthened in the next three years: for in 1858[283] we find another act which amended the act of 1855. This limited some provisions, and repealed the following sections: the tenth, which required that any person who should give a certificate that a person claimed as a fugitive was a slave should forfeit any State office he might hold; the eleventh, which forbade any person acting as attorney for a claimant to appear as counsel or attorney in the State courts; the twelfth, which made a violation of the preceding section sufficient ground for the impeachment of any officer of the Commonwealth; the thirteenth, which forbade any United States officer empowered to give certificate or issue warrants

from holding a State office; and the fourteenth, which made liable to removal any person holding a State judicial office who should also hold the office of Commissioner.

[Sidenote: Review of the Acts by States.]

=§ 82. Review of the acts by States.--Of the other New England States, Maine had no personal liberty law until 1855.[284] Two years after, however, in 1857,[285] a portion of an act declaring free all slaves brought by their masters into that State was devoted to a provision "to punish any attempt to exercise authority over them."

In New Hampshire, one of the laws of 1857[286] enacted that every person holding any person as a slave for any length of time, under any pretence, should be deemed guilty of felony; but provided that this should not apply to United States officers executing any legal process.

Vermont, by an act in 1840,[287] extended to fugitives the right of trial by jury, but after three years this was repealed,[288] only to be renewed in 1850.[289]

Connecticut, as has been noticed, had no personal liberty law. Rhode Island first passed such an act in 1848.[290] This forbade State officers to take cognizance of fugitive slave cases, and the use of State jails. Another statute, in 1854,[291] extended these provisions so as to apply to the national law of 1850.

The act of 1840 was the only Personal Liberty Law of New York.[292] Pennsylvania, some seven years later, forbade the use of jails, and punished State officers for participating in fugitive slave cases.[293] It also enacted a regulation of the same character as late as 1860.

Ohio made but one provision on the subject, and that lasted but a year. Her jails were closed to suspected slaves in 1857,[294] but in 1858 this law was repealed.[295]

Michigan passed such an act in 1855,[296] with the usual clauses on the use of jails and jury trial, and imposed a fine on false testimony against the defendant.

In 1858 Wisconsin and Kansas also passed similar acts.[297]

=§ 83. Effect of the personal liberty laws.--Since the avowed purpose of these laws was to obstruct the execution of one of the United States statutes, national and State legislation were thus brought into direct

conflict; but the Fugitive Slave Law was held constitutional by the Supreme Court, and any attempt to prevent its enforcement by positive means, however righteous from an ethical standpoint, must be considered an infraction of the Constitution, and of the common understanding between the States, on which the Union was founded.[298] The provisions denying the use of State institutions and officers, though distinctly unfriendly, were not unconstitutional. Many of the Abolitionists, however, held the national law to be unconstitutional, and at the same time morally so repugnant that it ought never to be executed.[299] The State laws were brought up by South Carolina, in her declaration of the causes of secession, as one of the chief grievances against the North; and President Buchanan, in his Message of 1860,[300] said they were "the most palpable violations of constitutional duty which had yet been committed." They must certainly be classed in principle with the Nullification Ordinance of 1832. Indeed, the legislature of Wisconsin, after the Supreme Court had overridden the decision of the State courts in the case of *Ableman v. Booth* that the national law was contrary to the national Constitution, passed some resolutions in which a "positive defiance is urged as the 'rightful remedy'" against such legislation.[301]

CHAPTER II

WHERE THE NEGRO LIVES

from *Half a Man - The Status of the Negro in New York* (1911)

Author: Mary White Ovington and Franz Boas

Release Date: May 20, 2012 [EBook #39742]

It is thirty-five years since, in his *Symphony*, Sidney Lanier told of

"The poor

That stand by the inward opening door
Trade's hand doth tighten evermore,
And sigh their monstrous foul air sigh
For the outside hills of liberty."

Were Lanier writing this today, we should wonder whether New York's crowded tenements had not served as inspiration for his figure. The island of Manhattan, about eight miles long by two miles wide, with an additional slender triangle of five miles at the north end, in 1905, housed two million one hundred and twelve thousand people. These men and women and children were not scattered uniformly throughout the island, but were placed in selected corners, one thousand to the acre, while a mile or so away large comfortable homes held families of two or three. This was Manhattan's condition in 1905, and with each succeeding year more congestion takes place, and more pressure is felt upon the inward opening door.[1]

The Negro with the rest of the poor of New York has his part in this excessive overcrowding. The slaver in which he made his entrance to this land provided in floor space six feet by one-foot-four for a man, five feet by one-foot-four for a woman, and four feet by one-foot-four for a child.[2] This outdoes any overcrowding New York can produce, but an ever increasing cost in food and rent is bringing into her interior bedrooms a mass of humanity approximating that of the slaver's ship. These new-comers, however, are not unwilling occupants, since unlike the slaves they may spend their day and much of their night amid an ocean of changing and exciting incidents. If you are young and strong, you care less where you sleep than where you may spend your waking hours.

From among the millions of New York's poor, can we pick out the Negroes in their tenements? This is not so difficult a task as it would have proved fifty years ago when the colored were scattered throughout the city; today we find them confined to fairly definite quarters. A black face on the lower East Side is viewed with astonishment, while on the middle West Side it is no more noticeable than it would be in Atlanta or New Orleans. Roughly we may count five Negro neighborhoods in Manhattan: Greenwich Village, the middle West Side, San Juan Hill, the upper East, and the upper West sides. Brooklyn has a large Negro population, but it is more widely distributed and less easily located than that of

Manhattan.

Of the five Manhattan neighborhoods the oldest is Greenwich Village, according to Janvier once the most attractive part of New York, where the streets "have a tendency to sidle away from each other and to take sudden and unreasonable turns." Here one finds such fascinating names as Minetta Lane and Carmine and Cornelia Streets. These and neighboring thoroughfares grow daily more grimy, however, and no longer merit Janvier's praise for cleanliness, moral and physical. The picturesque, friendly old houses are giving way to factories with high, monotonous fronts, where foreigners work who crowd the ward and destroy its former American aspect.

Among the old time aristocracy bearing Knickerbocker names there are a few colored people who delight in talking of the fine families and past wealth of old Greenwich Village. Scornful of the gibberish-speaking Italians, they sigh, too, at their own race as they see it, for the ambitious Negro has moved uptown, leaving this section largely to widowed and deserted women and degenerates. The once handsome houses, altered to accommodate many families, are rotten and unwholesome, while the newer tenements of West Third Street are darkened by the elevated road, and shelter vice that knows no race. Altogether, this is not a neighborhood to attract the new-comer. Here alone in New York I have found the majority of the adults northern born, men and women who, unsuccessful in their struggle with city life, have been left behind in these old forgotten streets.[3]

The second section, north of the first, lies between West Fourteenth and West Fifty-ninth Streets, and Sixth Avenue and the Hudson River. In 1880 this was the centre of the Negro population, but business has entered some of the streets, the Pennsylvania Railroad has scooped out acres for its terminal, and while the colored houses do not diminish in number, they show no decided increase. No one street is given over to the Negro, but a row of two or three or six or even eight tenements shelter the black man. The shelter afforded is poorer than that given the white resident whose dwelling touches the black, the rents are a little higher, and the landlord fails to pay attention to ragged paper, or to a ceiling which scatters plaster flakes upon the floor. In the Thirties there are rear tenements reached by narrow alley-ways. Crimes are committed by black neighbor against black neighbor, and the entrance to the rear yard offers a tempting place for a girl to linger at night. A rear tenement is New York's only approach to the alley of cities farther south.

There are startling and happy surprises in all tenement neighborhoods, and I recall turning one afternoon from a dark yard into a large beautiful room. Muslin curtains concealed the windows, the brass bed was covered with a thick white counterpane, and on either side of the fireplace, where coal burned brightly in an open grate, were two rare

engravings. It was a workroom, and the mistress of the house, steady, capable, and very black, was at her ironing-board. By her sat the colored mammy of the story book rocking lazily in her chair. She explained to me that her daughter had found her down south, two years ago, and brought her to this northern home, where she had nothing to do, for her daughter could make fifty dollars a month. This home picture was made lastingly memorable by the younger woman's telling me softly as she went with me to the door, "I was sold from my mother, down in Georgia, when I was two years old. I ain't sure she's my mother. She thinks so; but I can't ever be sure."

Homes beautiful both in appearance and in spirit can rarely occur where people must dwell in great poverty, but there are many efforts at attractive family life on these streets. A few of the blocks are orderly and quiet. Thirty-seventh Street, between Eighth and Ninth Avenues, is largely given over to the colored and is rough and noisy. Here and down by the river at Hell's Kitchen the rioting in 1900 between the Irish and the Negro took place. Men are ready for a fight today, and the children see much of hard drinking and quick blows.

"The poorer the family, the lower is the quarter in which it must live, and the more enviable appears the fortune of the anti-social class."^[4] A vicious world dwells in these streets and makes notorious this section of New York. For this is a part of the Tenderloin district, and at night, after the children's cries have ceased, and the fathers and mothers who have worked hard during the day have put out their lights, the automobiles rush swiftly past, bearing the men of the "superior race." Temptation is continuous, and the child that grows up pure in thought and deed does so in spite of his surroundings.

Before reaching West Fifty-ninth Street, the beginning of our third district, we come upon a Negro block at West Fifty-third Street. When years ago the elevated railroad was erected on this fashionable street, white people began to sell out and rent to Negroes; and today you find here three colored hotels, the colored Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations, the offices of many colored doctors and lawyers, and three large beautiful colored churches. The din of the elevated drowns alike the doctor's voice and his patient's, the client's and the preacher's.

From Fifty-ninth Street, walking north on Tenth Avenue, we begin to ascend a hill that grows in steepness until we reach Sixty-second Street. The avenue is lined with small stores kept by Italians and Germans, but to the left the streets, sloping rapidly to the Hudson River, are filled with tenements, huge double deckers, built to within ten feet of the rear of the twenty-five foot lot, accommodating four families on each of the five floors. We can count four hundred and seventy-nine homes on one side of the street alone!

This is our third district, San Juan Hill, so called by an on-looker who saw the policemen charging up during one of the once common race fights. It is a bit of Africa, as Negroid in aspect as any district you are likely to visit in the South. A large majority of its residents are Southerners and West Indians, and it presents an interesting study of the Negro poor in a large northern city. The block on Sixtieth Street has some white residents, but the blocks on Sixty-first, Sixty-second, and Sixty-third are given over entirely to colored. On the square made by the north side of Sixty-first, the south side of Sixty-second Streets, and Tenth and West End Avenues, 5.4 acres, the state census of 1905 showed 6173 inhabitants.[5] All but a few of these must have been Negroes, as the avenue sides of the block, occupied by whites, are short and with low houses. It is the long line of five-story tenements, running eight hundred feet down the two streets, that brings up the enumeration. The dwellings on Sixty-first and Sixty-second Streets are human hives, honeycombed with little rooms thick with human beings. Bedrooms open into air shafts that admit no fresh breezes, only foul air carrying too often the germs of disease.

The people on the hill are known for their rough behavior, their readiness to fight, their coarse talk. Vice is abroad, not in insidious form as in the more well-to-do neighborhood farther north, but open and cheap. Boys play at craps unmolested, gambling is prevalent, and Negro loafers hang about the street corners and largely support the Tenth Avenue saloons.

But San Juan Hill has many respectable families, and within the past five years it has taken a decided turn for the better. The improvement has been chiefly upon Sixty-third Street where two model tenements, one holding one hundred, the other one hundred and sixty-one families, have been opened under the management of the City and Suburban Homes Company, the larger one having been erected by Mr. Henry Phipps. Planning for a four per cent return on their investment, these landlords have rented only to respectable families, and their rule has changed the character of the block.[6] Old houses have been remodelled to compete with the newer dwellings, street rows have ceased, and the police captain of the district, we are told, now counts this as one of the peaceful and law-abiding blocks of the city. When its other blocks show a like improvement, San Juan Hill will no longer merit its belligerent name.

The lower East Side of Manhattan, a many-storied mass of tenements and workshops, where immigrants labor and sleep in their tiny crowded rooms, was once a fashionable American district. At that time Negroes dwelt near the whites as barbers, caterers, and coachmen, as laundresses and waiting-maids. But with the removal of the people whom they served, the colored men and women left also, and it is difficult to find an African face among the hundreds of thousands of Europeans south of Fourteenth Street. On Pell Street, in the Chinese quarter, there used to be two colored families on friendly terms with their neighbors, who, however,

went uptown for their pleasures and their church.

It is not until we reach Third Avenue and Forty-third Street that we come to the East Side Negro tenement. From this point, such houses run, a straggling line, chiefly between Second and Third Avenues, to the Bronx where the more well-to-do among the colored live. At Ninety-seventh Street, and on up to One Hundredth Street, dark faces are numerous. About six hundred and fifty Negro families live on these four streets and around the corner on Third Avenue. Occasionally they live in houses occupied by Jews or Italians. Above this section there are a number of Negro tenements in the One Hundred and Thirties, between Madison and Fifth Avenues--almost a West Side neighborhood, since it adjoins the large colored quarter to the west of Fifth Avenue. On the whole, the East Side is not often sought by the colored as a place of residence. Their important churches are in another part of the city, and every New Yorker knows the difficulty in making a way across Central Park. Yet, the neighborhood is not uncivil to them, and one rarely reads here of race friction. Doubtless this is in part owing to the smallness of the population, all of Manhattan east of Fifth Avenue containing but fourteen per cent of the apartments occupied by colored in the city; but it is partly, too, that Jews and Italians prove less belligerent tenement neighbors than Irish.

Five years ago, those of us who were interested in the Negro poor continually heard of their difficulty in securing a place to live. Not only were they unable to rent in neighborhoods suitable for respectable men and women, but dispossession, caused perhaps by the inroad of business, meant a despairing hunt for any home at all. People clung to miserable dwellings, where no improvements had been made for years, thankful to have a roof to shelter them. Yet all the time new-law tenements were being built, and Gentile and Jew were leaving their former apartments in haste to get into these more attractive dwellings. At length the Negro got his chance; not a very good one, but something better than New York had yet offered him--a chance to follow into the houses left vacant by the white tenants. Owing in part to the energy of Negro real estate agents, in part to rapid building operations, desirable streets, near the subway and the elevated railroad, were thrown open to the colored. This Negro quarter, the last we have to note and the newest, has been created in the past eight years. When the Tenement House Department tabulated the 1900 census figures for the Borough of Manhattan, and showed the nationalities and races on each block, it found only 300 colored families in a neighborhood that today accommodates 4473 colored families.[7] This large increase is on six streets, West Ninety-ninth, between Eighth and Ninth Avenues, West One Hundred and Nineteenth, between Seventh and Eighth Avenues, and West One Hundred and Thirty-third to One Hundred and Thirty-sixth Streets, between Fifth and Seventh Avenues, with a few houses between Seventh and Eighth, and on Lenox Avenues. There are colored tenements north and south of this; and while these figures are correct today,[8] they may

be wrong tomorrow, for new tenements are continually given over to the Negro people. Moreover, on all of these streets are colored boarding and lodging houses, crowded with humanity. Houses today fall into the hands of the Negro as a child's blocks, placed on end, tumble when a push is given to the first in the line. The New York Times, in August, 1905, gives a graphic account of the entrance of the colored tenant on West Ninety-ninth Street. Two houses had been opened for a short time to Negroes when the other house-owners capitulated, and the colored influx came: "The street was so choked with vehicles Saturday that some of the drivers had to wait with their teams around the corners for an opportunity to get into it. A constant stream of furniture trucks loaded with the household effects of a new colony of colored people who are invading the choice locality is pouring into the street. Another equally long procession, moving in the other direction, is carrying away the household goods of the whites from their homes of years." The movement is not always so swift as this, but it is continuous.

This last colored neighborhood perhaps ought not to be spoken of as belonging to the poor; not to Lanier's poor whose door pressed so tighteningly inward. Here are homes where it is possible, with sufficient money, to live in privacy, and with the comforts of steam heat and a private bath. But rents are high, and if money is scarce, the apartment must be crowded and privacy lost. Moreover, vice has made its way into these newly acquired streets. The sporting class will always pay more and demand fewer improvements than the workers, and, unable to protect himself, the respectable tenant finds his children forced to live in close propinquity to viciousness. Each of these new streets has this objectionable element in its population, for while some agents make earnest efforts to keep the property they handle respectable, they find the owner wants money more than respectability.

In our walk up and down Manhattan, turning aside and searching for Negro-tenanted streets, we ought to see one thing with clearness--that the majority of the colored population live on a comparatively few blocks. This is a new and important feature of their New York life, and in certain parts of the city it develops a color problem, for while you seem an inappreciable quantity when you constitute two per cent of the population in the borough, you are of importance when you form one hundred per cent of the population of your street. This congestion is accompanied by a segregation of the race. The dwellers in these tenements are largely new-comers, men and women from the South and the West Indies,[9] seeking the North for greater freedom and for economic opportunity. Like any other strangers they are glad to make their home among familiar faces, and they settle in the already crowded places on the West Side. Freedom to live on the East Side next door to a Bohemian family may be very well, but sociability is better. The housewife who timidly hangs her clothes on the roof her first Monday morning in New York is pleased to find the next line swinging with the laundry of a Richmond acquaintance, who instructs her in the perplexing housekeeping

devices of her flat. No chattering foreigner could do that. And while to be welcome in a white church is inspiring, to find the girl you knew at home, in the next pew to you, is still more delightful when you have arrived, tired and homesick, at the great city of New York. So the colored working people, like the Italians and Jews and other nationalities, have their quarter in which they live very much by themselves, paying little attention to their white neighbors. If the white people of the city have forced this upon them, they have easily accepted it. Should this two per cent of the population be compelled to distribute itself mathematically over the city, each ward and street having its correct quota, it would evince dissatisfaction. This is not true of the well-to-do element, but of the mass of the Negro workers whose homes we have been visiting. Loving sociability, these new-comers to the city--and it is in the most segregated districts that the greater number of southern and British born Negroes are found--keep to their own streets and live to themselves. If they occupy all the sidewalk as they talk over important matters in front of their church, the outsider passing should recognize that he is an intruder and take to the curb. He would leave the sidewalk entirely were he on Hester Street or Mulberry Bend. New-comers to New York usually segregate, and the Negro is no exception.

While congestion and segregation seem important to us as we look at these colored quarters, I suspect that the matter most pertinent to the Negro new-comer is, not where he will live nor how he will live, but whether he will be able to live in New York at all, whether he can meet the landlord's agent the day he comes to the door. For New York rents have mounted upwards as have her tenements. The Phipps model houses, built especially to benefit the poor, charge twenty-five dollars a month for four tiny rooms and bath; and while this is a little more than the dark old time rooms would bring, it takes about all of the twenty-five dollars you make running an elevator, to get a flat in New York. What wonder that, once secured, it is overrun with lodgers, or that, if privacy is maintained, there is not enough money left to feed and clothe the growing household. The once familiar song of the colored comedian still rings true in New York:

"Rufus Rastus Johnson Brown,
What you gwine ter do when de rent comes roun'?"

Testimony from *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States From Interviews with Former Slaves: Volume IV, Georgia Narratives, Part 1 1936-1938*

Author: Work Projects Administration

Release Date: October 5, 2004 [EBook #13602]

EX-SLAVE INTERVIEW

JAMES BOLTON

Athens, Georgia

Written by:

Mrs. Sarah H. Hall

Federal Writers' Project

Residency 4

Athens, Georgia

Edited by:

Miss Maude Barragan

Residency 13

Augusta, Georgia

"It never was the same on our plantation after we done laid Mistess away," said James Bolton, 85 year old mulatto ex-slave. "I ain't never forget when Mistess died--she had been so good to every nigger on our plantation. When we got sick, Mistess allus had us tended to. The niggers on our plantation all walked to church to hear her funeral sermon and then walked to the graveyard to the buryin'."

James, shrivelled and wrinkled, with his bright eyes taking in everything on one of his rare visits to town, seemed glad of the chance to talk about slavery days. He spoke of his owner as "my employer" and hastily corrected himself by saying, "I means, my marster."

"My employer, I means my marster, and my mistess, they was sho' all right white folkses," he continued. "They lived in the big 'ouse. Hit was all painted brown. I heard tell they was more'n 900 acres in our plantation and lots of folkses lived on it. The biggest portion was woods. My paw, he was name Whitfield Bolton and Liza Bolton was my maw. Charlie, Edmund, Thomas and John Bolton was my brothers and I had one sister, she was Rosa. We belonged to Marse Whitfield Bolton and we lived on his plantation in Oglethorpe County near Lexington, not far from the Wilkes County line.

"We stayed in a one room log cabin with a dirt floor. A frame made outen pine poles was fastened to the wall to hold up the mattresses. Our mattresses was made outen cotton bagging stuffed with wheat straw. Our

kivers was quilts made outen old clothes. Slave 'omens too old to work in the fields made the quilts.

"Maw, she went up to the big house onc't a week to git the 'lowance or vittles. They 'lowanced us a week's rations at a time. Hit were generally hog meat, corn meal and sometimes a little flour. Maw, she done our cookin' on the coals in the fireplace at our cabin. We had plenty of 'possums and rabbits and fishes and sometimes we had wild tukkeys and partidges. Slaves warn't spozen to go huntin' at night and everybody know you can't ketch no 'possums 'ceppin' at night! Jus' the same, we had plenty 'possums and nobody ax how we cotch 'em!" James laughed and nodded. "Now, 'bout them rabbits! Slaves warn't 'lowed to have no guns and no dogs of they own. All the dogs on our plantation belonged to my employer--I means, to my marster, and he 'lowed us to use his dogs to run down the rabbits. Nigger mens and boys 'ud go in crowds, sometimes as many as twelve at one time, and a rabbit ain't got no chance 'ginst a lot of niggers and dogs when they light out for to run 'im down!

"What wild critters we wanted to eat and couldn't run down, we was right smart 'bout ketchin' in traps. We cotch lots of wild tukkeys and partidges in traps and nets. Long Crick runned through our plantation and the river warn't no fur piece off. We sho' did ketch the fishes, mostly cats, and perch and heaps and heaps of suckers. We cotch our fishes mos'n generally with hook and line, but the carpenters on our plantation knowed how to make basket traps that sho' nuff did lay in the fishes! God only knows how long it's been since this old nigger pulled a big shad out of the river. Ain't no shads been cotch in the river round here in so long I disremembers when!

"We didn' have no gardens of our own round our cabins. My employer--I means, my marster--had one big gyarden for our whole plantation and all his niggers had to work in it whensomever he wanted 'em to, then he give 'em all plenty good gyarden sass for theyselves. They was collards and cabbage and turnips and beets and english peas and beans and onions, and they was allus some garlic for ailments. Garlic was mostly to cure wums (worms). They roasted the garlic in the hot ashes and squeez the juice outen it and made the chilluns take it. Sometimes they made poultices outen garlic for the pneumony.

"We saved a heap of bark from wild cherry and poplar and black haw and slippery ellow trees and we dried out mullein leaves. They was all mixed and brewed to make bitters. Whensomever a nigger got sick, them bitters was good for--well ma'am, they was good for what ailed 'em! We tuk 'em for rheumatiz, for fever, and for the misery in the stummick and for most all sorts of sickness. Red oak bark tea was good for sore throat.

"I never seed no store bought clothes twel long atter freedom done come! One slave 'oman done all the weavin' in a separate room called the 'loom

house.' The cloth was dyed with home-made coloring. They used indigo for blue, red oak bark for brown, green husks offen warnicks (walnuts) for black, and sumacs for red and they'd mix these colors to make other colors. Other slave 'omans larned to sew and they made all the clothes. Endurin' the summertime we jus' wore shirts and pants made outen plain cotton cloth. They wove wool in with the cotton to make the cloth for our winter clothes. The wool was raised right thar on our plantation. We had our own shoemaker man--he was a slave named Buck Bolton and he made all the shoes the niggers on our plantation wore.

"I waren't nothin' but chillun when freedom come. In slavery-time chilluns waren't 'lowed to do no wuk kazen the marsters wanted they niggers to grow up big and strong and didn' want 'em stunted none. Tha's howcome I didn' git no mo' beatin's than I did! My employer--I means, my marster, never did give me but one lickin'. He had done told me to watch the cows and keep 'em in the pastur'. I cotch lots of grasshoppers and started fishin' in the crick runnin' through the pastur' and fust thing I knowed, the overseer was roundin' up all the other niggers to git the cows outen the cornfields! I knowed then my time had done come!"

James was enjoying the spotlight now, and his audience did not have to prompt him. Plantation recollections crowded together in his old mind.

"We had one overseer at a time," he said, "and he allus lived at the big 'ouse. The overseers warn't quality white folkses like our marster and mistess but we never heard nuffin' 'bout no poor white trash in them days, and effen we had heard sumpin' like that we'd have knowed better'n to let Marster hear us make such talk! Marster made us call his overseer 'Mister.' We had one overseer named Mr. Andrew Smith and another time we had a overseer named Mr. Pope Short. Overseers was jus' there on the business of gettin' the work done--they seed atter everybody doin' his wuk 'cordin' to order.

"My employer--I means, my marster, never 'lowed no overseer to whup none of his niggers! Marster done all the whuppin' on our plantation hisself. He never did make no big bruises and he never drawed no blood, but he sho' could burn 'em up with that lash! Niggers on our plantation was whupped for laziness mostly. Next to that, whuppings was for stealin' eggs and chickens. They fed us good and plenty but a nigger is jus' bound to pick up chickens and eggs effen he kin, no matter how much he done eat! He jus' can't help it. Effen a nigger ain't busy he gwine to git into mischief!

"Now and then slaves 'ud run away and go in the woods and dig dens and live in 'em. Sometimes they runned away on 'count of cruel treatment, but most of the time they runned away kazen they jus' didn't want to wuk, and wanted to laze around for a spell. The marsters allus put the dogs atter 'em and git 'em back. They had black and brown dogs called 'nigger hounds' what waren't used for nothin' but to track down niggers.

"They warent no such place as a jail whar we was. Effen a nigger done sumpin' disorderly they jus' natcherly tuk a lash to 'im. I ain't never seed no nigger in chains twel long atter freedom done come when I seed 'em on the chain gangs.

"The overseer woke us up at sunrise--leas'n they called it sunrise! We would finish our vittles and be in the fields ready for wuk befo' we seed any sun! We laid off wuk at sunset and they didn't drive us hard. Leas'wise, they didn' on our plantation. I done heard they was moughty hard on 'em on other plantations. My marster never did 'low his niggers to wuk atter sundown. My employer, I means my marster, didn't have no bell. He had 'em blow bugles to wake up his hands and to call 'em from the fields. Sometimes the overseer blowed it. Mistess done larned the cook to count the clock, but none of the rest of our niggers could count the clock.

"I never knowed Marster to sell but one slave and he jus' had bought her from the market at New Orleans. She say it lonesome off on the plantation and axed Marster for to sell her to folkses livin' in town. Atter he done sold her, every time he got to town she beg 'im to buy her back! But he didn' pay her no more 'tention. When they had sales of slaves on the plantations they let everybody know what time the sale gwine to be. When the crowd git togedder they put the niggers on the block and sell 'em. Leas'wise, they call it 'puttin' on the block'--they jus' fotch 'em out and show 'em and sell 'em.

"They warent no church for niggers on our plantation and we went to white folkses church and listened to the white preachers. We set behind a partition. Sometimes on a plantation a nigger claim he done been called to preach and effen he kin git his marster's cawn-sent he kin preach round under trees and in cabins when t'aint wuk time. These nigger preachers in slavery time was called 'chairbackers.' They warent no chairbackers 'lowed to baptize none of Marster's niggers. White preachers done our baptizin' in Long Crick. When we went to be baptized they allus sang, 'Amazing Grace! How sweet the sound!'"

The old negro's quavery voice rose in the familiar song. For a moment he sat thinking of those long-ago Sundays. His eyes brightened again, and he went on:

"We never done no wuk on Sundays on our plantation. The church was 'bout nine miles from the plantation and we all walked there. Anybody too old and feeble to walk the nine miles jus' stayed home, kazen Marster didn't 'low his mules used none on Sunday. All along the way niggers from other plantations 'ud jine us and sometimes befo' we git to the church house they'd be forty or fifty slaves comin' along the road in a crowd! Preaching generally lasted twel bout three o'clock. In summertime we had dinner on the ground at the church. Howsomever we didn' have no barbecue

like they does now. Everybody cooked enough on Sadday and fatched it in baskets.

"I was thirty years old when I jined the church. Nobody ought to jine no church twels't he is truly borned of God, and effen he is truly borned of God he gwine know it. Effen you want a restin' place atter you leaves this old world you ought to git ready for it now!

"When folkses on our plantation died Marster allus let many of us as wanted to go, lay offen wuk twel atter the buryin'. Sometimes it were two or three months atter the buryin' befo' the funeral sermon was preached. Right now I can't rekelleck no song we sung at funerals cep'n 'Hark from the tombs a doleful sound.'"

The reedy old voice carried the funeral hymn for a few minutes and then trailed off. James was thinking back into the past again.

"Spring plowin' and hoein' times we wukked all day Saddays, but mos'en generally we laid off wuk at twelve o'clock Sadday. That was dinnertime. Sadday nights we played and danced. Sometimes in the cabins, sometimes in the yards. Effen we didn' have a big stack of fat kindling wood lit up to dance by, sometimes the mens and 'omans would carry torches of kindling wood whils't they danced and it sho' was a sight to see! We danced the 'Turkey Trot' and 'Buzzard Lope', and how we did love to dance the 'Mary Jane!' We would git in a ring and when the music started we would begin wukkin' our footses while we sang 'You steal my true love and I steal your'n!'

"Atter supper we used to gether round and knock tin buckets and pans, we beat 'em like drums. Some used they fingers and some used sticks for to make the drum sounds and somebody allus blowed on quills. Quills was a row of whistles made outen reeds, or sometimes they made 'em outen bark. Every whistle in the row was a different tone and you could play any kind of tune you wants effen you had a good row of quills. They sho' did sound sweet!

"'Bout the most fun we had was at corn shuckin's whar they put the corn in long piles and called in the folkses from the plantations nigh round to shuck it. Sometimes four or five hunnert head of niggers 'ud be shuckin' corn at one time. When the corn all done been shucked they'd drink the likker the marsters give 'em and then frolic and dance from sundown to sunup. We started shuckin' corn 'bout dinnertime and tried to finish by sundown so we could have the whole night for frolic. Some years we 'ud go to ten or twelve corn shuckin's in one year!

"We would sing and pray Easter Sunday and on Easter Monday we frolicked and danced all day long! Christmas we allus had plenty good sumpin' to eat and we all got togedder and had lots of fun. We runned up to the big 'ouse early Christmas mornin' and holler out: 'Mornin', Christmas Gif!'

Then they'd give us plenty of Sandy Claus and we would go back to our cabins to have fun twel New Year's day. We knowed Christmas was over and gone when New Year's day come, kazen we got back to wuk that day atter frolickin' all Christmas week.

"We didn' know nuttin' 'bout games to play. We played with the white folkses chilluns and watched atter 'em but most of the time we played in the crick what runned through the pastur'. Nigger chilluns was allus skeered to go in the woods atter dark. Folkses done told us Raw-Head-and-Bloody Bones lived in the woods and git little chilluns and eat 'em up effen they got out in the woods atter dark!

"'Rockabye baby in the tree tops' was the onliest song I heard my maw sing to git her babies to sleep. Slave folkses sung most all the time but we didn' think of what we sang much. We jus' got happy and started singin'. Sometimes we 'ud sing effen we felt sad and lowdown, but soon as we could, we 'ud go off whar we could go to sleep and forgit all 'bout trouble!" James nodded his gray head with a wise look in his bright eyes. "When you hear a nigger singin' sad songs hit's jus' kazen he can't stop what he is doin' long enough to go to sleep!"

The laughter that greeted this sally brought an answering grin to the wrinkled old face. Asked about marriage customs, James said:

"Folkses didn' make no big to-do over weddings like they do now. When slaves got married they jus' laid down the broom on the floor and the couple jined hands and jumped back-uds over the broomstick. I done seed 'em married that way many a time. Sometimes my marster would fetch Mistess down to the slave quarters to see a weddin'. Effen the slaves gittin' married was house servants, sometimes they married on the back porch or in the back yard at the big 'ouse but plantation niggers what was field hands married in they own cabins. The bride and groom jus' wore plain clothes kazen they didn' have no more.

"When the young marsters and mistesses at the big houses got married they 'lowed the slaves to gadder on the porch and peep through the windows at the weddin'. Mos'en generally they 'ud give the young couple a slave or two to take with them to they new home. My marster's chilluns was too young to git married befo' the war was over. They was seven of them chilluns; four of 'em was gals.

"What sort of tales did they tell 'mong's't the slaves 'bout the Norf befo' the war? To tell the troof, they didn't talk much like they does now 'bout them sort of things. None of our niggers ever runned away and we didn' know nuthin' 'bout no Norf twel long atter freedom come. We visited round each other's cabins at night. I did hear tell 'bout the patterollers. Folkses said effen they cotched niggers out at night they 'ud give 'em 'what Paddy give the drum'.

"Jus' befo' freedom comed 'bout 50 Yankee sojers come through our plantation and told us that the bull-whups and cow-hides was all dead and buried. Them sojers jus' passed on in a hurry and didn' stop for a meal or vittles or nuffin'. We didn't talk much 'bout Mr. Abbieham Lincum endurin' slavery time kazen we was skeered of him atter the war got started. I don't know nothin' 'bout Mr. Jef'son Davis, I don't remember ever hearin' 'bout him. I is heard about Mr. Booker Washin'ton and they do say he runned a moughty good school for niggers.

"One mornin' Marster blowed the bugle his own self and called us all up to the big 'ouse yard. He told us: 'You all jus' as free as I is. You are free from under the taskmarster but you ain't free from labor. You gotter labor and wuk hard effen you aims to live and eet and have clothes to wear. You kin stay here and wuk for me, or you kin go wharsomever you please.' He said he 'ud pay us what was right, and Lady, hit's the troof, they didn't nary a nigger on our plantation leave our marster then! I wukked on with Marster for 40 years atter the war!"

James had no fear of the Ku Klux.

"Right soon atter the war we saw plenty of Ku Kluxers but they never bothered nobody on our plantation. They allus seemed to be havin' heaps of fun. 'Course, they did have to straighten out some of them brash young nigger bucks on some of the other farms round about. Mos' of the niggers the Ku Kluxers got atter was'n on no farm, but was jus' roamin' 'round talkin' too much and makin' trouble. They had to take 'em in hand two or three times befo' some of them fool free niggers could be larned to behave theyselves! But them Ku Kluxers kept on atter 'em twels't they larned they jus got to be good effen they 'spects to stay round here.

"Hit was about 40 years atter the war befo' many niggers 'gun to own they own lan'. They didn' know nothin' 'bout tendin' to money business when the war done ended and it take 'em a long time to larn how to buy and sell and take care of what they makes." James shook his head sadly. "Ma'am, heaps of niggers ain't never larned nothin' 'bout them things yit!

"A long time atter the war I married Lizy Yerby. I didn' give Liza no chanc't for to dress up. Jus' went and tuk her right outer the white folkses' kitchen and married her at the church in her workin' clothes. We had 13 chilluns but they ain't but two of 'em livin' now. Mos' of our chilluns died babies. Endurin' slavery Mistess tuk care of all the nigger babies borned on our plantations and looked atter they mammies too, but atter freedom come heap of nigger babies died out."

James said he had two wives, both widows.

"I married my second wife 37 years ago. To tell the troof, I don't rightly know how many grandchilluns I got, kazen I ain't seed some of

'em for thirty years. My chilluns is off fum here and I wouldn' know to save my life whar they is or what they does. My sister and brothers they is done dead out what ain't gone off, I don't know for sho' whar none of 'em is now."

A sigh punctuated James' monologue, and his old face was shadowed by a look of fear.

"Now I gwine tell you the troof. Now that it's all over I don't find life so good in my old age, as it was in slavery time when I was chillun down on Marster's plantation. Then I didn' have to worry 'bout whar my clothes and my somepin' to eat was comin' from or whar I was gwine to sleep. Marster tuk keer of all that. Now I ain't able for to wuk and make a livin' and hit's sho' moughty hard on this old nigger."

[HW: Dist. 7
Ex-Slave #22]
Adella S. Dixon
District 7

PIERCE CODY
OLD SLAVE STORY
[HW: About 88]
[MAY 8 1937]

Pierce Cody was the eldest son of Elbert and Dorothy Cody. His father was born in Richmond, Virginia, his mother in Warren County. When the Emancipation Proclamation was signed, he, the eldest child in a large family, was in his early teens. This group lived on the place owned by Mr. Bob Cody, [HW: whose] family was a group of ardent believers in the Hardshell Baptist faith. So firm was their faith that a church of this denomination was provided for the slaves and each one required to become a member. A white minister invariably preached the then worn out doctrine of a slave's duty to his master, the reward of faithfulness and the usual admonition against stealing.

The members of this church were required to fast on one day of the week, the fast lasting all day until seven in the evening. The small boys, both white and colored, resenting the abstinence from food, usually secured a reserve supply which was cached during the week and secretly enjoyed on fast day. Fish were plentiful in all the streams and they sometimes sneaked away to the river and after enjoying the sport, cooked their catch on the banks of the stream.

Groups of ministers--30 to 40--then traveled from one plantation to another spreading the gospel, and were entertained as they traveled. On one occasion the group arrived at the Cody estate on fast day. The boys having been on one of their secret fishing trips had caught so many perch that they were not able to consume them on the banks, so had smuggled them to the kitchen, coaxed the cook to promise to prepare them, and had also sworn her to absolute secrecy regarding their origin. Although the kitchen was not directly connected with the "big house", the guests soon detected the aroma of fresh fish and requested that they be allowed to partake of this delicacy. When the boys, as well as the servants, heard this, they became panicky for they feared the wrath of the master. But the catch was so heartily relished that instead of the expected punishment, they were commended and allowed to fish on the next day of fasting.

As was characteristic of many others, the planter's home was near the center of a vast estate and in this instance had a tall lookout on the roof from which the watchman might see for miles around. The "quarters" were nearby and the care-free children who played in the large yard were closely watched as they were often stolen by speculators and later sold at auctions far away. The land was divided into many fields each of which was used to cultivate a particular product. Each field had its special crew and overseer.

Cody's father was [HW: one of the] feeders [HW: who] arose at least two hours before sunrise, to feed the stock. A large number of horses and more than two hundred head of cattle had to be fed by sunrise when they were to be turned into the pastures or driven to the field to begin the day's work. After sunrise, his father's duty [HW: as] foreman for plowers began. Other workers were hoe hands, additional foremen, cooks, weavers, spinners, seamstresses, tailors, shoemakers, etc. As everything used was grown and made on the estate there was plenty of work for all and in many instances [HW: slaves] learned trades which they liked and which furnished a livelihood when they were set free.

[HW: When he entered his teens] Cody's first duties began [HW: as] a plowhand who broke "newground." As all of this land was to be plowed, a lack of skill in making straight furrows did not matter, so beginners were preferably used. Shortly after he began plowing he was made foreman of one of the groups. Thus encouraged by his master's faith in his ability to do a man's work, he assumed a "grown up" attitude under the stimulus of his new responsibilities and was married shortly after.

At this time marriages resulted from brief courtships. After the consent of the girl was obtained, it was necessary to seek permission from the master, whether she lived on the same or an adjoining plantation. In the latter case, the marriage rites were performed by her master. The minister was not used in most instances--the ceremony [HW: being] read from a testament by the owner of the bride. Marriages were nearly always

performed out of doors in the late afternoon. The bride's wedding dress was fashioned of cloth made on the plantation from a pattern of her own designing. Attendants at marriages were rare. After the ceremony, the guests danced far into the night by music from the fiddle and banjo. Refreshments consisting of ginger cakes, barbecue, etc., were served. Such a couple, belonging to two different masters, did not keep house. The [HW: husband] was allowed to visit his wife on Wednesday night and Saturday when he might remain through Sunday. All marriage unions were permanent and a barren wife was considered the only real cause for separation.

Church services for this group were held jointly with the white members, the two audiences being separated by a partition. Gradually, the colored members became dissatisfied with this type of service and withdrew to form a separate church. The desire for independence in worship must necessarily have been strong, to endure the inconveniences of the "brush arbor" churches that they resorted to. As a beginning, several trees were felled, and the brush and forked branches separated. Four heavy branches with forks formed the framework. Straight poles were laid across these to form a crude imitation of beams and the other framework of a building. The top and sides were formed of brush which was thickly placed so that it formed a solid wall. A hole left in one side formed a doorway from which beaten paths extended in all directions. Seats made from slabs obtained at local sawmills completed the furnishing. In inclement weather, it was not possible to conduct services here, but occasionally showers came in the midst of the service and the audience calmly hoisted umbrellas or papers and with such scant protection, the worship continued.

Sunday afternoons were quietly spent, visiting being the only means of recreation. One of the favorite stay at home pastimes was the inspection of heads. The pediculous condition made frequent treatment necessary for comfort. The young white men liked to visit the "quarters" and have the slaves search their heads. They would stretch full length upon the cabin floors and rest their heads upon a pillow. Usually they offered a gift of some sort if many of the tiny parasites were destroyed, so the clever picker who found a barren head simply reached into his own and produced a goodly number. There existed on this plantation an antagonistic feeling toward children (born of slave parents) with a beautiful suit of hair, and this type of hair was kept cropped very short.

Gossip, stealing, etc. was not tolerated. No one was ever encouraged to "tattle" on another. Locks were never used on any of the cabin doors or on the smokehouse. Food was there in abundance and each person was free to replenish his supply as necessary. Money was more or less a novelty as it was only given in 1¢ pieces at Christmas time. As food, clothing, and shelter were furnished, the absence was not particularly painful. Connected with nearly every home were those persons who lived "in the woods" in preference to doing the labor necessary to remain at their

home. Each usually had a scythe and a bulldog for protection. As food became scarce, they sneaked to the quarters in the still of the night and coaxed some friend to get food for them from the smokehouse. Their supply obtained, they would leave again. This was not considered stealing.

Medical care was also free. Excellent physicians were maintained. It was not considered necessary to call a physician until home remedies--usually teas made of roots--had had no effect. Women in childbirth were cared for by grannies,--Old women whose knowledge was broad by experience, acted as practical nurses.

Several cooks were regularly maintained. Some cooked for the men who had no families, others for the members of the big house and guests. The menus varied little from day to day. A diet of bread--called "shortening bread,"--vegetables and smoked meat were usually consumed. Buttermilk was always plentiful. On Sundays "seconds" (flour) were added to the list and butter accompanied this. Chickens, fresh meat, etc., were holiday items and were seldom enjoyed at any other time.

Not only were the slaves required to work but the young men of the "big house" also had their duties. In the summer they went fishing. While this sport was enjoyed, it was done on an extremely large scale in order that everyone should have an adequate supply of fish. The streams abounded in all kinds of fish, and nets were used to obtain large quantities necessary. In winter hunting was engaged in for this same purpose. Rabbits, squirrels, etc., were the usual game, but in addition the trapping of wild hogs was frequently indulged in. The woods contained many of these animals which were exceptionally vicious. The hunters, however, trapped them in much the same way that rabbits are now caught, without injury to the flesh [TR: 'making the meat more delicious' marked out]. Deer were also plentiful and venison enjoyed during its season. Horned snakes were the greatest impediments to more abundant hunting.

Knowledge of the war was kept from the slaves until long after its beginning. Most of them had no idea what "war" meant and any news that might have been spread, fell on deaf ears. Gradually this knowledge was imparted by Yankee peddlers who came to the plantation to sell bed-ticking, etc. When the master discovered how this information was being given out, these peddlers were forbidden to go near the quarters. This rule was strictly enforced.

Eventually, the Confederate soldiers on their way to and from camp began to stop at the house. Food and everything available was given to them. Three of Mr. Cody's sons were killed in battle. As the Northern soldiers did not come near the home, the loss of property was practically negligible [TR: '--six cents being all' marked out].

When the Emancipation Proclamation was signed, the slaves were called to the "big house" in a group to receive the news that they were free. Both old and young danced and cheered when this information was given out. Many of the families remained there for a year or two until they were able to find desirable locations elsewhere.

Cody attributes his ability to reach a ripe old age to the excellent care he took of himself in his youth. He has used tobacco since he was a small boy and does not feel that it affects his health. Distilled liquor was plentiful in his young days and he always drank but never to an excess.

PLANTATION LIFE AS VIEWED BY AN EX-SLAVE

MINNIE DAVIS, Age 78
237 Billups St.
Athens, Ga.

Written By:
Mrs. Sadie B. Hornsby
Athens, Georgia

Edited By:
Mrs. Sarah H. Hall
Athens, Georgia

and
John N. Booth
WPA Residencies 6 & 7

August 29, 1938

The bareness of Minnie Davis' yard was relieved by a single rosebush, and her small house might best be described as a "tumble-down shack." An unsteady wooden box served as a step to the fragment of porch before the front door.

"Good mornin', Mam," was the greeting of a Negro man who hastened to answer the visitor's knock at the door. "Yes Mam, Miss Minnie's at home." He turned, tapped on the door of one of the four rooms adjoining the hall, and called: "Miss Minnie, a white lady wants to see you." Minnie hobbled to the door and invited the visitor to her bedroom, where a suite of handsome walnut furniture reflected the period when marble tops were standard parts of dressers and washstands. A low chair, an old table, and a rusty heater completed the furnishings of the room.

Age and ill health have not dealt kindly with Minnie, and her short-cut, kinky hair is almost white, but her eyes and face retain a remarkably youthful appearance. She is a small thin woman of gingercake color and, despite the sweltering heat, she wore a pink flannel nightgown, faded and dingy, and a pair of high top black shoes, so badly run over that she hobbled along on the sides of them. Minnie is well educated, and she taught school for so long that her speech is remarkably free of dialect.

When the nature of the visit was explained, Minnie said: "A white woman has been here several times before, but I was sick and didn't understand clearly what she wanted me to tell her." She then explained that she did not care to talk for publication at all. She said she was hungry and had nothing at all in the house to eat. Her nephew, Ed, an ex-postman lived with her, she explained, and he would go for food if there was any money. She might feel like talking a little if she had a little something to eat. The interviewer provided the cash and Ed soon returned with a pint of milk and some cinnamon rolls. After her repast, Minnie began to talk, giving the impression that every word was carefully weighed before it was uttered.

"I was born in Greene County near Penfield, Georgia," she said. "Aggie Crawford was my mother and she was married to Jim Young. My only sister was Mariah, and my three brothers were Ned, John, and Jim. Ned was a mulatto. I know who his father was, but of course you won't ask me that. I wouldn't want to expose my own mother or the man who was Ned's father. I was quite a small child during the war period, and I can tell you very little of that time, except the things my mother told me when I grew old enough to remember. My mother belonged to the Crawford family in Greene County, but when I knew anything we were living in Athens and were the slaves of Marster John Crawford.

"As children we played around the yard; those of us who were old enough had odd jobs to do. The unceiled house that my father and mother shared with three other families was weatherboarded and had a chimney made of sticks and dirt. There was a bed in each corner of the room and from one to three children slept in the bed with their parents: the rest of the children slept on the floor. The tall old home-made wooden beds had very much the appearance of beds used now, except that cords were used instead of the metal springs that came into use later. Our osnaburg mattress ticks were filled with straw. I'm quite sure there were no pillows. There was also a two-story house on the lot for slaves." She was asked what she called her father and mother during slavery time, and her reply was: "I have always said father and mother because I liked it better, and the Bible teaches us to say that.

"Grandmother Dilsey and grandfather Levi Crawford lived in Lexington. I saw my grandmother one time, but I don't know what she did at the white folks' house. Grandfather was a carpenter.

"I never got any money in slavery time. If the slaves ever got any, it was when the Yankees came through here. At that time the white people gave their money to the slaves for safekeeping, and after the Yankees went on it was returned to the white owners.

"My mother was the cook and looked after the house. Oh, yes indeed, we had good food to eat. Bread, milk, meat, collard greens, turnips, and potatoes. I would say we had just everything that was grown in the garden and on the plantations to eat at that time. The cooking was done in the kitchen in the yard. The fireplace was as wide as the end of this room, and a long iron bar extended from one end to the other. The great cooking pots were suspended over the coals from this bar by means of pot hooks. Heavy iron skillets with thick lids were much used for baking, and they had ovens of various sizes. I have seen my mother bake beautiful biscuits and cakes in those old skillets, and they were ideal for roasting meats. Mother's batter cakes would just melt in your mouth and she could bake and fry the most delicious fish. There was no certain thing that I liked to eat more than anything else in those days. I was young and had a keen appetite for all good things. Miss Fannie and Miss Susan often made candy and it was so good I could have eaten all they made, had they given it to me. My father hired his time out; he made and sold gingercakes on the railroad.

"In the summertime we wore homespun dresses made with a full skirt gathered onto a tight-fitting waist. In the wintertime the dresses were made of checked woolen material called linsey cloth. For underwear, we wore balmoral petticoats and osnaburg drawers. We went barefooted most of the time. I remember one particular time when the ground was frozen and I went about without any shoes, but it didn't bother me. Barefooted children seldom had bad colds in winter. We wore just anything on Sunday, but we had to look nice and clean.

"Marster John Crawford, son of the distinguished William H. Crawford, was my owner. Indeed, he was good to us. I'll tell you after awhile about the time he wouldn't let the town marshal whip my mother. They told me his wife was a fine woman and that she was as good to her slaves as she could be. She died very young in life and Marse John's sisters, Miss Fannie and Miss Susan, kept house for him after that. Marse John's three children were Miss Fannie, Miss Rosa, and Marse Allie. Miss Rosa married Marse Tom Golden, and Miss Fannie married a Gerdine; I've forgotten his first name.

"Marse John may have had an overseer on one of his plantations, but I don't remember. I do know he didn't have a carriage driver for he didn't have a carriage. I don't believe I can describe the peculiar shape of his fine eight-room house. It was on Dougherty Street, right back of Scudder's School. The Crawfords were considered very uppity people and their slaves were uppish too. Marse John didn't have many slaves and

they had to get up and get going early every morning. Marse John was postmaster of Athens and had to be in his office by eight o'clock every morning so he ordered that his breakfast be served regularly at seven-thirty.

"No Mam, our white folks didn't teach their slaves to read and write because it was against the law. However, they did read the Bible to us, and the slaves that were smart enough, were asked to repeat the verses they had learned from hearing Miss Fannie, Miss Sue, and Marse John read. The Crawford children were caught teaching my mother to read and write, but they were made to stop. Mother was quick to learn and she never gave up. She would steal the newspapers and read up about the war, and she kept the other slaves posted as to how the war was progressing. She knew when the war was over, almost as soon as Marse John did.

"I don't recall any certain reason why the slaves were punished; they needed it, I'm sure of that. Some folks need to be punished now. Miss Sue, as we called her, whipped the slaves for misbehavior. I remember one time there was quite a commotion. The town marshal came to our house to whip my mother. It had been told that she had been writing letters, asking people to buy whiskey from her, but Marse John wouldn't let the marshal touch her. There was a jail, but I don't recall that any of Marse John's slaves were ever put in there. I was told that his slaves were, as a rule, well behaved and that they gave him no trouble.

"Yes Mam, we went to church, that is, those of us who cared to go did. There wasn't any separate church for colored people in Athens, that I can remember. We went to church and Sunday School at the First Presbyterian Church, where the slaves were allowed to sit in the gallery. I recall that Dr. Hoyt used to pray that the Lord would drive the Yankees back. He said that 'Niggers were born to be slaves.' My mother said that all the time he was praying out loud like that, she was praying to herself: 'Oh, Lord, please send the Yankees on and let them set us free.' I wasn't enough of a singer to have a favorite song, and I was too happy playing with the Crawford children to be interested in going to baptizings and funerals.

"I did go to my father's funeral. When he was taken sick Dr. Holt attended his case, and it was not long before he told Marse John that Father would never get well. When he died Mother hollered and screamed something terrible. Miss Sue told her not to cry because, 'the Lord knows best.' 'Yes, Miss Sue,' answered Mother, 'but you have never loved a man to lose.' With that, they both cried. When anyone died in those days, the people sat up all night and didn't go to bed until the funeral was over. Now, no real sympathy is shown.

"I don't believe any of Marse John's slaves ever went to the war. He was good to them and everyone of them loved him. I heard of patterollers chasing slaves and whipping them if they were caught away from home

without a pass, and sometimes they locked them up. However, nothing of the kind ever happened to any of Marse John's slaves. He was a highly respected citizen and everyone in Athens knew better than to touch his Negroes.

"After the work for the day was finished at the big house, the slaves went to their quarters to weave cloth and sew, but when ten o'clock came and the bell sounded, everything had to be quiet. Slaves on our place worked Saturday afternoons the same as any other day. On Saturday nights the young folks and a few of the older folks danced. Some of them got passes from Marse John so they could visit around. They popped corn, pulled candy, or just sat around and talked. Those of us who desired went to Sunday School and church on Sundays; others stayed at home and did their washing and ironing, and there was always plenty of that to be done.

"Christmas was a grand time at Marse John's. We had everything good to eat under the sun at that time and, as my mother was the cook, I was sure of getting my share of the good things. Miss Fannie and Miss Sue played Santa Claus to slave children. I was sorry when Mary got too smart and peeped to see what it was all about, for after that they just came to our house and handed us the things that would have come as Santa Claus.

"New Year's Day was no different from other days, except that Marse John gave the grown folks whiskey to drink that day like he did on Christmas morning. They couldn't risk giving slaves much whiskey because it made them mean, and then they would fight the white folks. They had to be mighty careful about things like that in order to keep down uprisings.

"My mother went to cornshuckings, cotton pickings, and quiltings. They must have had wonderful times, to hear her tell it. She said that after the corn was shucked, cotton picked, or quilts quilted, they always gave them plenty of good things to eat and drink and let them alose to enjoy themselves for the balance of the night. Those things took place at harvest time, and everyone looked forward to having a good time at that season. Mother said that Marse John was particular with his slaves, and wouldn't let them go just anywhere to these things.

"About the only game I can remember playing as a child was a doll game. The Crawford children would use me for the doll, and then when my turn came to play mamma and claim one of them for my doll, Miss Fanny or Miss Sue would appear and then I would have to be a doll for them. I didn't mind, for I dearly loved them all.

"Now about Raw Head and Bloody Bones; I am going to tell you, Miss, my Marster's people were cultured and refined, and they wouldn't allow such things told to their own children or to their slaves' children. They didn't want anything said or done to frighten any little children, and

if a nurse or anyone else was caught doing such a thing, that person was punished for it. With the heritage of training like that I could hardly be expected to believe in such things.

"Marse John was grand to sick slaves. He always sent for Dr. Moore, who would make his examination and write out his prescription. When he left his parting word was usually 'Give him a sound thrashing and he will get better.' Of course he didn't mean that; it was his little joke. Dr. Holt, Dr. Crawford Long, and Dr. Jones Long were sometimes called in for consultation on particularly serious cases. We didn't like Dr. Moore and usually begged for one of the other doctors. I don't think my white folks used teas made of herbs, leaves or roots; they may have, but I don't remember it. However, I do know that we wore little sacks of asafetida around our necks to keep off diseases, and the white folks wore it too.

"On the day we learned of the surrender, the Negroes rallied around the liberty flag pole that they set up near where the city hall is now. All day long they cut up and there was a song they sung that day that went something like this:

'We rally around the flag pole of liberty,
The Union forever, Hurrah! Boys Hurrah!'

"Next morning when the Negroes got up the white folks had cut that pole down. We were mortally afraid of the Yankees when they appeared here a short time after the surrender. We were afraid of the Ku Klux Klan riders too. The Negroes did act so bad; there were lots of killings going on for a long time after the war was supposed to be over.

"Mother was glad and sorry too that she was free. Marse John had been so good to all his slaves that none of them really wanted to leave him. We stayed on a while, then mother left and rented a room. She worked hard and bought a house as soon as she could; others did the same. There were very few slaves that had any money at all to begin on.

"Immediately following the surrender northern people opened Knox Institute. One of my teachers was Miss Dora Brooks, a white woman from the North. The principal was a white man, he was Mr. Sortur. After I graduated from Knox Institute, I went to the Atlanta University four years, then came back to Athens and taught school here forty years. I taught whatever grade they assigned me to each year, never any certain grade from year to year. First and last, I've taught from first grade through high school. I would be teaching now if it were not for my bad health. I receive a teacher's pension, but have never applied for an old age pension.

"My husband was Samuel B. Davis, publisher of the __Athens Clipper__. I published this newspaper myself for a short while after his death, then

sold it. We didn't have a big wedding, just a very simple one at my mother's house. I was married in a nice white dress, but it was nothing fancy. Our two children were born dead. Once I had a nice home, beautifully furnished. All I have left of it is this old house and my good bedroom suite. The rest of my possessions have gotten away from me during my continued illness.

"I often think of Abraham Lincoln; he did a good deed for my race. Jeff Davis was a good man and, no doubt, he thought he was doing the right thing. Booker T. Washington was a man of brilliant mind, but he was radically wrong in many of his views pertaining to education of the black race. He lectured here once, but I didn't bother to hear him speak.

"Yes Mam, indeed I had rather be free. Oh! religion is glorious. If God has set you free from the bonds and penalties of sin, I think you ought to live up to your Lord's commands. I dearly love to go to church and hear the preacher tell of God. It gives me strength to live until He is ready for me to go.

"Now, Miss, I hope I have told you what you wanted to know, but I must admit the things that took place way back there are rather vague in my mind. I'm an old woman and my mind is not as clear as it once was. Next week, if I am strong enough to make the trip, I am going to spend the day with Mary Colbert, and go over the old times you and I have discussed. She remembers them better than I do, because she is older."

YOUR NEGRO NEIGHBOR

from *Your Negro Neighbor*

Author: Benjamin Brawley

Release Date: February 12, 2011 [EBook #35256]

To the People of the United States of America

CITIZENS AND PATRIOTS:

Our country is still in the midst of the greatest war in the history of mankind. Already our sons and brothers have died in Europe. While the sacrifice is great, and each day comes home more closely to us, there must be no ceasing of the conflict until victory is assured. The principles of Christ must prevail, and democracy must be given some chance in the world. Because we believe this, because we love our country, because we wish to see our country truly noble and great, I am once more asking your attention to the vital subject of the place of the Negro in our American life.

We feel that we may not unreasonably ask a hearing at this time. In the war now raging we have fully done our part, if indeed any American could venture to say that he has done his part. Whether as officers or stevedores our men have borne their share of the brunt of battle. Let it not be supposed that many of them did not enter the conflict with misgiving. They could not readily forget that under our country's flag crimes unspeakable had been committed against them. They could not help remembering that even as they went forth to fight, their sisters and their wives did not have the full protection of the law. They still had faith, however, in the great heart of the American people; and they could not believe that when the nation's finest manhood was being given for the principles of democracy and Christianity, deliberate injustice would indefinitely be tolerated.

We remember of course at this time that public sentiment with reference to the Negro has undergone a great change within fifty years. Immediately after the Civil War there was a spirit, in the North at least, to give him a helping hand, though even here he was not always wanted as a laborer. In a period when feeling ran high there was a tendency to base his rights on the fundamental principles of the republic. Recently, however, in the stress of commercialism, the status of the Negro, along with many other grave moral questions, has been much in the background. Suddenly the war burst upon us and gave us a new era of soul-questioning.

The period of industrialism was formally signaled by one of the most telling speeches ever delivered in this or any other country, all the more effective because the orator was a high-minded, patriotic gentleman. In 1886 Henry W. Grady addressed the New England Club in New York on "The New South." The two preceding decades had been an era

of great scandal in the public life of the United States. Grady spoke to practical men, and he knew his ground. He asked his listeners to bring their "full faith in American fairness and frankness to judgment" upon what he had to say. He pictured in brilliant language the Confederate soldier, "ragged, half-starved, heavy-hearted," who wended his way homeward to find his house in ruins and his farms devastated. He spoke kindly also of the Negro: "Whenever he struck a blow for his own liberty he fought in open battle, and when at last he raised his black and humble hands that the shackles might be struck off, those hands were innocent of wrong against his helpless charges." But Grady also implied that the Negro had already received too much attention and sympathy from the North. Said he: "To liberty and enfranchisement is as far as law can carry the Negro. The rest must be left to conscience and common sense." Hence he asked that the South be left alone in the handling of its grave problem. The North took him at his word. Result: Disfranchisement, segregation, and a lynching record that leaves us very little to say about the Turk in Armenia.

To-day the Negro daily suffers such indignities as make the very words Liberty and Democracy a travesty. If he rides in a trolley-car in the South he is assigned a few rear seats. If his part of the car is crowded and seats near the front are vacant, he must still stand. If he takes a train he must ride in a dirty half-coach, the other half being the baggage car; and he enters the railway station by a side-door. In all the cities, even some of the largest, there is a persistent endeavor to restrict his residence to some unfavorable part of the town; witness the segregation struggles in Atlanta, St. Louis, and Baltimore. Places of refinement and refreshment, libraries, parks, etc., are regularly closed to him. If Negro children go to school they stand only a fraction of a chance of getting an education--or a seat. In Massachusetts, of the children from six to fourteen years of age, 93 per cent. are in school. In Louisiana 68.4 per cent. of the white children are in school and 37.4 per cent. of the Negro children. In Birmingham there is a public high school to which Negro students have to pay to go; in all Georgia there is no public high school for Negroes at all. Not long ago a colored man of excellent character and standing boarded a train between Birmingham and Chattanooga, accompanying his sister. Some white men invaded the coach and proceeded to smoke. The colored man protested to the officials, and forthwith both he and his sister received a beating. Such are the incidents that drive the iron into the Negro's soul. We submit that they are altogether unjust and entirely at variance with the principles for which we are at war.

Not only at home, however, do we have to consider the problem. The war has brought us as never before face to face with the whole foreign policy of the United States, especially as regards the mixed races and colored peoples with whom the National Government has to deal. With one country after another the question is raised whether, under her

imperialistic policy and the Monroe Doctrine, the United States has acted with the honor and the diplomatic courtesy that the cases demanded. Already, as is well known, in spite of repeated professions of friendship, the whole of South America views the great country at the North with suspicion; and the ultimate reason for the feeling is that in South America the color line is a vanishing quantity, whereas in the United States it is a very definite reality. Chile has not forgotten the gratuitous insults of 1891, nor Brazil our arrogance in 1893. The conscience of the nation is not yet satisfied that we did not for selfish reasons in 1898 force war upon a weaker nation; and the treatment of Colombia in the matter of the Panama Canal Zone was so infamous that ten years afterwards the United States was still wondering just what sum of money would hush the mouths of the Colombian people. In Santo Domingo we have taken away from the people the right to handle their own money; and two years ago in Hayti, ostensibly for the suppression of a revolution, the country was seized, American officers installed, and a Southern white man appointed minister to the country, by tradition one especially jealous of its integrity as a nation. More recently we have purchased St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix, on which islands, let us remember, the population is made up almost entirely of Negroes. In this connection we recall the Indian, remembering that Osceola was captured under a flag of truce. It is the cold, hard truth that the treatment by the United States of all colored or mixed races has been one marked by arrogance, injustice, and lack of honor. Said L.C. Wilson, in writing from Porto Rico to the American Missionary: "When the Americans came to the island sixteen years ago there was very little color line, but now it is well established. It has probably been hastened by the presence of many officials from the Southern States. Even the Y.M.C.A. has been compelled to recognize it, and the fine new building is only for white young men."

In the face of such things we go back to fundamentals. The Declaration of Independence says: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." The Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States says: "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States, or by any State, on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude." But above even such noble utterances as these stand the words of Him whom we profess to follow: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself."

And who is my neighbor?

We feel that the United States can not long remain in the dilemma of fighting for democracy while at the same time she denies the

fundamental principles of democracy at home. We cannot much longer pluck the mote from our brother's eye unmindful at the same time of the beam in our own.

Meanwhile, however, the Negro goes quietly about his work. He has picked cotton and pulled fodder, scrubbed floors and washed windows, fired engines and dipped turpentine. He is not quite content, however, to be simply the doormat of American civilization. Twelve million people are ceasing to accept slander and insult without a protest. They have heard about freedom, justice, and happiness, though these things seemed not for them. They can not quite see the consistency of fighting for outraged Belgians or Armenians so long as the rights of citizens at home are violated. In the words of Foraker, "They ask no favors because they are Negroes, but only justice because they are men."

Yours for liberty and democracy,

BENJAMIN BRAWLEY.

CHAPTER V.

from *The Future of the American Negro*

Author: Booker T. Washington

Release Date: September 2, 2008 [EBook #26507]

In this chapter I wish to show how, at Tuskegee, we are trying to work out the plan of industrial training, and trust I shall be pardoned the seeming egotism if I preface the sketch with a few words, by way of example, as to the expansion of my own life and how I came to undertake the work at Tuskegee.

My earliest recollection is of a small one-room log hut on a slave plantation in Virginia. After the close of the war, while working in the coal mines of West Virginia for the support of my mother, I heard, in some accidental way, of the Hampton Institute. When I learned that it was an institution where a black boy could study, could have a chance to work for his board, and at the same time be taught how to work and to realise the dignity of labor, I resolved to go there. Bidding my mother good-by, I started out one morning to find my way to Hampton, although I was almost penniless and had no definite idea as to where Hampton was. By walking, begging rides, and paying for a portion of the journey on the steam-cars, I finally succeeded in reaching the city of Richmond; Virginia. I was without money or friends. I slept on a sidewalk; and by working on a vessel the next day I earned money enough to continue my way to the institute, where I arrived with a capital of fifty cents. At Hampton I found the opportunity--in the way of buildings, teachers, and industries provided by the generous--to get training in the classroom and by practical touch with industrial life,--to learn thrift, economy, and push. I was surrounded by an atmosphere of business, Christian influence, and spirit of self-help, that seemed to have awakened every faculty in me, and caused me for the first time to realise what it meant to be a man instead of a piece of property.

While there, I resolved, when I had finished the course of training, I would go into the Far South, into the Black Belt of the South, and give my life to providing the same kind of opportunity for self-reliance, self-awakening, that I had found provided for me at Hampton.

My work began at Tuskegee, Alabama, in 1881, in a small shanty church, with one teacher and thirty students, without a dollar's worth of property. The spirit of work and of industrial thrift, with aid from the State and generosity from the North, have enabled us to develop an institution which now has about one thousand students, gathered from twenty-three States, and eighty-eight instructors. Counting students, instructors, and their families, we have a resident population upon the school grounds of about twelve hundred persons.

The institution owns two thousand three hundred acres of land, seven hundred of which are cultivated by student labor. There are six hundred head of live-stock, including horses, mules, cows, hogs, and sheep. There are over forty vehicles that have been made, and are now used, by the school. Training is given in twenty-six industries. There is work in wood, in iron, in leather, in tin; and all forms of domestic economy are engaged in. Students are taught mechanical and architectural drawing, receive training as agriculturists, dairymen, masons, carpenters, contractors, builders, as machinists, electricians, printers, dressmakers, and milliners, and in other directions.

The value of the property is \$300,000. There are forty-two buildings, counting large and small, all of which, with the exception of four, have been erected by the labour of the students.

Since this work started, there has been collected and spent for its founding and support \$800,000. The annual expense is now not far from \$75,000. In a humble, simple manner the effort has been to place a great object-lesson in the heart of the South for the elevation of the coloured people, where there should be, in a high sense, that union of head, heart, and hand which has been the foundation of the greatness of all races since the world began.

What is the object of all this outlay? It must be first borne in mind that we have in the South a peculiar and unprecedented state of things. The cardinal needs among the eight million coloured people in the South, most of whom are to be found on the plantations, may be stated as food, clothing, shelter, education, proper habits, and a settlement of race relations. These millions of coloured people of the South cannot be reached directly by any missionary agent; but they can be reached by sending out among them strong, selected young men and women, with the proper training of head, hand, and heart, who will live among them and show them how to lift themselves up.

The problem that the Tuskegee Institute keeps before itself constantly is how to prepare these leaders. From the outset, in connection with religious and academic training, it has emphasised industrial, or hand, training as a means of finding the way out of present conditions. First, we have found the industrial teaching useful in giving the student a chance to work out a portion of his expenses while in school. Second, the school furnishes labour that has an economic value and at the same time gives the student a chance to acquire knowledge and skill while performing the labour. Most of all, we find the industrial system valuable in teaching economy, thrift, and the dignity of labour and in giving moral backbone to students. The fact that a student goes into the world conscious of his power to build a house or a wagon or to make a set of harness gives him a

certain confidence and moral independence that he would not possess without such training.

A more detailed example of our methods at Tuskegee may be of interest. For example, we cultivate by student labour seven hundred acres of land. The object is not only to cultivate the land in a way to make it pay our boarding department, but at the same time to teach the students, in addition to the practical work, something of the chemistry of the soil, the best methods of drainage, dairying, cultivation of fruit, the care of live-stock and tools, and scores of other lessons needed by people whose main dependence is on agriculture.

Friends some time ago provided means for the erection of a large new chapel at Tuskegee. Our students made the bricks for this chapel. A large part of the timber was sawed by the students at our saw-mill, the plans were drawn by our teacher of architectural and mechanical drawing, and students did the brick-masonry, the plastering, the painting, the carpentry work, the tinning, the slating, and made most of the furniture. Practically, the whole chapel was built and furnished by student labour. Now the school has this building for permanent use, and the students have a knowledge of the trades employed in its construction.

While the young men do the kinds of work I have mentioned, young women to a large extent make, mend, and laundry the clothing of the young men. They also receive instruction in dairying, horticulture, and other valuable industries.

One of the objections sometimes urged against industrial education for the Negro is that it aims merely to teach him to work on the same plan that he worked on when in slavery. This is far from being the object at Tuskegee. At the head of each of the twenty-six industrial divisions we have an intelligent and competent instructor, just as we have in our history classes, so that the student is taught not only practical brick-masonry, for example, but also the underlying principles of that industry, the mathematics and the mechanical and architectural drawing. Or he is taught how to become master of the forces of nature, so that, instead of cultivating corn in the old way, he can use a corn cultivator that lays off the furrows, drops the corn into them, and covers it; and in this way he can do more work than three men by the old process of corn planting, while at the same time much of the toil is eliminated and labour is dignified. In a word, the constant aim is to show the student how to put brains into every process of labour, how to bring his knowledge of mathematics and the sciences in farming, carpentry, forging, foundry work, how to dispense as soon as possible with the old form of *ante-bellum* labour. In the erection of the chapel referred to, instead of letting the money which was given to us go into outside hands, we made it accomplish three

objects: first, it provided the chapel; second, it gave the students a chance to get a practical knowledge of the trades connected with the building; and, third, it enabled them to earn something toward the payment of their board while receiving academic and industrial training.

Having been fortified at Tuskegee by education of mind, skill of hand, Christian character, ideas of thrift, economy, and push, and a spirit of independence, the student is sent out to become a centre of influence and light in showing the masses of our people in the Black Belt of the South how to lift themselves up. Can this be done? I give but one or two examples. Ten years ago a young coloured man came to the institute from one of the large plantation districts. He studied in the class-room a portion of the time, and received practical and theoretical training on the farm the remainder of the time. Having finished his course at Tuskegee, he returned to his plantation home, which was in a county where the coloured people outnumbered the whites six to one, as is true of many of the counties in the Black Belt of the South. He found the Negroes in debt. Ever since the war they had been mortgaging their crops for the food on which to live while the crops were growing. The majority of them were living from hand-to-mouth on rented land, in small one-room log cabins, and attempting to pay a rate of interest on their advances that ranged from fifteen to forty per cent. per annum. The school had been taught in a wreck of a log cabin, with no apparatus, and had never been in session longer than three months out of twelve. He found the people, as many as eight or ten persons, of all ages and conditions and of both sexes, huddled together and living in one-room cabins year after year, and with a minister whose only aim was to work upon the emotions. One can imagine something of the moral and religious state of the community.

But the remedy! In spite of the evil the Negro got the habit of work from slavery. The rank and file of the race, especially those on the Southern plantations, work hard; but the trouble is that what they earn gets away from them in high rents, crop mortgages, whiskey, snuff, cheap jewelry, and the like. The young man just referred to had been trained at Tuskegee, as most of our graduates are, to meet just this condition of things. He took the three months' public school as a nucleus for his work. Then he organized the older people into a club, or conference, that held meetings every week. In these meetings he taught the people, in a plain, simple manner, how to save their money, how to farm in a better way, how to sacrifice,--to live on bread and potatoes, if necessary, till they could get out of debt, and begin the buying of lands.

Soon a large proportion of the people were in a condition to make contracts for the buying of homes (land is very cheap in the South) and to live without mortgaging their crops. Not only this; under the

guidance and leadership of this teacher, the first year that he was among them they learned how and built, by contributions in money and labour, a neat, comfortable school-house that replaced the wreck of a log cabin formerly used. The following year the weekly meetings were continued, and two months were added to the original three months of school. The next year two more months were added. The improvement has gone on until these people have every year an eight months' school.

I wish my readers could have the chance that I have had of going into this community. I wish they could look into the faces of the people, and see them beaming with hope and delight. I wish they could see the two or three room cottages that have taken the place of the usual one-room cabin, see the well-cultivated farms and the religious life of the people that now means something more than the name. The teacher has a good cottage and well-kept farm that serve as models. In a word, a complete revolution has been wrought in the industrial, educational, and religious life of this whole community by reason of the fact that they have had this leader, this guide and object-lesson, to show them how to take the money and effort that had hitherto been scattered to the wind in mortgages and high rents, in whiskey and gewgaws, and how to concentrate it in the direction of their own uplifting. One community on its feet presents an object-lesson for the adjoining communities, and soon improvements show themselves in other places.

Another student, who received academic and industrial training at Tuskegee, established himself, three years ago, as a blacksmith and wheelwright in a community; and, in addition to the influence of his successful business enterprise, he is fast making the same kind of changes in the life of the people about him that I have just recounted. It would be easy for me to fill many pages describing the influence of the Tuskegee graduates in every part of the South. We keep it constantly in the minds of our students and graduates that the industrial or material condition of the masses of our people must be improved, as well as the intellectual, before there can be any permanent change in their moral and religious life. We find it a pretty hard thing to make a good Christian of a hungry man. No matter how much our people "get happy" and "shout" in church, if they go home at night from church hungry, they are tempted to find something to eat before morning. This is a principle of human nature, and is not confined alone to the Negro. The Negro has within him immense power for self-uplifting, but for years it will be necessary to guide him and stimulate his energies.

The recognition of this power led us to organise, five years ago, what is known as the Tuskegee Negro Conference,--a gathering that meets every February, and is composed of about eight hundred representatives, coloured men and women, from all sections of the Black Belt. They come in ox-carts, mule-carts, buggies, on muleback and horseback, on foot, by railroad. Some travel all night in order to

be present. The matters considered at the conference are those that the coloured people have it in their own power to control,--such as the evils of the mortgage system, the one-room cabin, buying on credit, the importance of owning a home and of putting money in the bank, how to build school-houses and prolong the school term, and to improve their moral and religious condition. As a single example of the results, one delegate reported that since the conference was started, seven years ago, eleven people in his neighbourhood had bought homes, fourteen had gotten out of debt, and a number had stopped mortgaging their crops. Moreover, a school-house had been built by the people themselves, and the school term had been extended from three to six months; and, with a look of triumph, he exclaimed, "We's done libin' in de ashes."

Besides this Negro Conference for the masses of the people, we now have a gathering at the same time known as the Tuskegee Workers' Conference, composed of the officers and instructors of the leading coloured schools in the South. After listening to the story of the conditions and needs from the people themselves, the Workers' Conference finds much food for thought and discussion. Let me repeat, from its beginning, this institution has kept in mind the giving of thorough mental and religious training, along with such industrial training as would enable the student to appreciate the dignity of labour and become self-supporting and valuable as a producing factor, keeping in mind the occupations open in the South to the average man of the race.

This institution has now reached the point where it can begin to judge of the value of its work as seen in its graduates. Some years ago we noted the fact, for example, that there was quite a movement in many parts of the South to organise and start dairies. Soon after this, we opened a dairy school where a number of young men could receive training in the best and most scientific methods of dairying. At present we have calls, mainly from Southern white men, for twice as many dairymen as we are able to supply. The reports indicate that our young men are giving the highest satisfaction, and are fast changing and improving the dairy product in the communities where they labour. I have used the dairy industry simply as an example. What I have said of this industry is true in a larger or less degree of the others.

I cannot but believe, and my daily observation and experience confirm me in it, that, as we continue placing men and women of intelligence, religion, modesty, conscience, and skill in every community in the South, who will prove by actual results their value to the community, this will constitute the solution for many of the present political and sociological difficulties. It is with this larger and more comprehensive view of improving present conditions and laying the foundation wisely that the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute is training men and women as teachers and industrial leaders.

Over four hundred students have finished the course of training at this institution, and are now scattered throughout the South, doing good work. A recent investigation shows that about 3,000 students who have taken only a partial course are doing commendable work. One young man, who was able to remain in school but two years, has been teaching in one community for ten years. During this time he has built a new school-house, extended the school term from three to seven months, and has bought a nice farm upon which he has erected a neat cottage. The example of this young man has inspired many of the coloured people in this community to follow his example in some degree; and this is one of many such examples.

Wherever our graduates and ex-students go, they teach by precept and example the necessary lesson of thrift, economy, and property-getting, and friendship between the races.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE KU KLUX KLAN

from *When the Ku Klux Rode* (1912)

Author: Eyre Damer

Release Date: April 5, 2011 [EBook #35771]

Before proceeding with the narrative, an explanation of the origin and purposes of the Ku Klux Klan may interest the reader. The facts mentioned were derived from authentic and official sources.

The first den was organized in Pulaski, Giles county, Tennessee, in 1866, and Pulaski continued to be the centre of the order throughout its existence as an interstate organization. Six men organized the den for diversion and amusement in a community where life was dull and monotonous. The original name was Ku Kloi (from the Greek word Ku Klos), meaning band or circle. It was changed to Ku Klux and Klan was added.

The constitution of Tennessee was imposed by a fraction of the people. The legislature passed an act restricting suffrage which disfranchised three-fourths of the native population of the middle and western parts of the state. This obsequious legislature also passed acts ratifying the illegal edicts of the autocratic and tyrannical Governor Brownlow ("The Parson"); the sedition law was revived and amplified; freedom of speech and press was overthrown, and a large militia force composed of negroes was created and made responsible to the governor alone. At an election enough men had been permitted to register to thwart Brownlow's plans. He threw out the entire vote of twenty-eight counties. Registrars were removed, registration set aside, the counties placed under martial law, and negro militia quartered therein. The legislature had become unanimously Republican in both branches.

The people began to consider means of counteracting this high-handed tyranny. The Pulaski Ku Klux organization had attracted much attention and branches of it had been organized in many parts of the state. Leaders of the people quickly saw that it could be utilized for the purpose in view. And this was done. The order, thus perverted, soon spread from Virginia to Texas. The ritual was simple and easily memorized and was never printed; but a copy of the prescript was obtained and used in a trial in Tennessee and reproduced in United States government publications. At a meeting in Nashville of delegates from all dens this was modified. That convention designated the southern territory as "The Invisible Empire." It was subdivided into "realms" (corresponding to states); realms were divided into "dominions" (congressional districts); dominions into "provinces" (counties); provinces into "dens." Officers were designated as follows: Grand Wizard of Invisible Empire and his ten Genii (and the grand wizard's powers were almost autocratic), Grand Dragon of Realm and his Eight Hydras, Grand Titan of Dominion and his Six Furies, Grand Cyclops of Den and his Two Night Hawks, Grand Monk, Grand Scribe, Grand Exchequer, Grand Turk, Grand Sentinel, The Genii, Hydras, Furies, Gobbins and Night Hawks

were staff officers. It is said that the gradation and distribution of authority were perfect, and that no more perfectly organized order ever existed in the world. The costume consisted of a mask with openings for the nose and eyes; a tall, pointed hat of stiff material; a gown or robe to cover the entire person. Each member was provided with a whistle, and with this, and by means of a code of signals, communicated with his comrades. They used a cypher to fix dates, etc., and published their notices in the newspapers, until repressive laws forbade this. Their horses were robed and their hoofs muffled.

Meanwhile, other orders formed: White brotherhood, White League, Pale Faces, Constitutional Union Guards and Knights of White Camelia; but all evidence shows that they were for the most part short-lived, the very name of Ku Klux having caught the fancy of the members. General Forrest is credited with having consolidated all of them into the one grand order. An interview with General Forrest was published in the Cincinnati Commercial in September, 1868, in which he was quoted as saying that in Tennessee the klan embraced a membership of 40,000, and in all the states 550,000. He said to the congressional commission that the order was disbanded by him when it had fulfilled its purpose. No doubt he meant that the general organization was disbanded, for certainly detached bodies existed after the date fixed by him as that of the disbandment. Fleming says that the general was initiated by Captain John W. Morton, formerly his chief of artillery, and became Grand Wizard. In his testimony General Forrest said that the klan in Tennessee was intended as a defensive organization to offset the Union League; to protect ex-Confederates from extermination by Brownlow's militia; to prevent the burning of gins, mills and residences.

Congress and the radical legislatures resorted to all possible means to break up the klans, but they existed until after white supremacy was restored. Even then, counterfeit bodies perverted the name until they were suppressed by the natural rulers of the land. Congress passed a bill which provided for suspension of civil government in any district in which Ku Klux lawlessness existed, thus depriving all the people of trial by jury and other rights, and placing whole communities under the ban of military power. The Alabama legislative enactment pronounced anyone found in disguise a felon and outlaw. It also provided that if a person was whipped or killed by men in disguise, the county could be sued for a penalty ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000; and it made it the duty of the prosecuting attorney of the county to institute suit for and in behalf of the victim or his relatives, in any case where no indictment was found.

After the Nashville convention the order courted publicity, in order to inspire respect for its powers, and the Ku Klux sometimes paraded in daylight. Their appearance in public was sudden and unheralded; and they disappeared as silently and mysteriously. The perfection of their movements in drill revealed the training which the members had received as cavalymen during the war. Sometimes the parades were at night, and then

the mystery of their sudden appearance and the weirdness of the spectacle were heightened. One of the night parades was in Huntsville, and the story of it was circulated throughout the north as evidence that another revolution was imminent. It was in the nature of an acceptance of challenge, and the circumstances connected with it were as follows:

On October 30, 1868, C. C. Sheets, a Grant candidate for elector, made a speech in Florence. About ten o'clock that night a band of disguised men visited his sleeping apartment. He attempted to escape by way of a gallery, but was caught and taken back to his room. After a short stay the band retired without having in any way harmed him. Sheets said that they exacted from him a promise that he would desist from making inflammatory speeches. Later in the same month Sheets delivered a speech in Huntsville. It was reported that in the course of that speech he told his colored audience that he had been interfered with a few nights before in Florence by Ku Klux, and that he had promised them then that he would not make the abusive and inflammatory speeches that he had been making; but up there, where there were so many colored people, he wasn't afraid to say what he pleased, and that if the colored people would do what was becoming in them, they would carry with them weapons and shoot down those disguised men wherever they found them; that the reason the Ku Klux paraded the country was because the negroes were weak-kneed.

The speech excited the negroes. They remained in town all day, and at night a meeting was held in the court-house and many negroes, with guns, attended. During the day leading negroes loudly proclaimed that Ku Klux would never again be permitted to enter the town; that if they attempted to do so, they would be shot on sight. A federal military officer had said it would be lawful to do this. A rumor circulated that Ku Klux were assembling at a point some miles distant, and about dark two large posses of negroes, under command of deputy sheriffs, repaired to points along principal roads to intercept them. While the speaking at the court-house was in progress, fugitive negroes from the posses, which had suddenly dissolved at the approach of danger, rushed to the court-house and announced that Ku Klux were marching on the town. The meeting broke up in confusion and the people hurried into the yard. All the near-by streets and the sidewalks surrounding the square were thronged with people, white and black. Suddenly the cavalcade, numbering about two hundred, fully uniformed in tall conical hats, long gowns, and hoods with eyeholes, some armed with guns and sabres, wheeled into the square, and without sound save the whistle signals--then almost as awe-inspiring as had been the "rebel yell"--rode in military order completely around the court-house, and then turned into one of the streets. Proceeding along this some distance, the column halted and formed into battle line. After maintaining this formation for a few minutes, the march was resumed and the band disappeared.

There was stationed in Hunstville at that time a regiment of regular troops, and their commander, General Cruger, with some of his staff

officers, from a hotel veranda viewed the spectacle of the Ku Klux parade. His comment was that "it was fine but absurd."

There was an unfortunate episode of the event:

Just as the Ku Klux withdrew there was a discharge of firearms in the courtyard. Some witnesses said that the first discharge, an accidental one, due to nervousness, caused the others. Judge Thurlow, a visitor, was mortally wounded, and said a short while before his death that he was shot accidentally by his Republican friends. A negro seated on the court-house steps was killed instantly. Two white men and a negro were wounded. This tragedy was without design, and the excitement was quickly quieted.

A rumor that a few undisguised Ku Klux were posted about the square was supported by the fact that after the departure of the troop three men, having disguises in hand, were arrested by soldiers while in the act of mounting horses in one of the side streets. Later in the night they were rescued from jail by their comrades, and were never officially identified. But their paraphernalia was retained by the officials and often exhibited and photographed. Perhaps none other was ever captured directly from a wearer.

Of the Meaning of Progress

from *The Souls of Black Folk*

Author: W. E. B. Du Bois

Release Date: January 29, 2008 [EBook #408]

Willst Du Deine Macht verkunden,
Wahle sie die frei von Sunden,
Steh'n in Deinem ew'gen Haus!
Deine Geister sende aus!
Die Unsterblichen, die Reinen,
Die nicht fuhlen, die nicht weinen!
Nicht die zarte Jungfrau wahle,
Nicht der Hirtin weiche Seele!

SCHILLER.

Once upon a time I taught school in the hills of Tennessee, where the broad dark vale of the Mississippi begins to roll and crumple to greet the Alleghanies. I was a Fisk student then, and all Fisk men thought that Tennessee--beyond the Veil--was theirs alone, and in vacation time they sallied forth in lusty bands to meet the county school-commissioners. Young and happy, I too went, and I shall not soon forget that summer, seventeen years ago.

First, there was a Teachers' Institute at the county-seat; and there distinguished guests of the superintendent taught the teachers fractions and spelling and other mysteries,--white teachers in the morning, Negroes at night. A picnic now and then, and a supper, and the rough world was softened by laughter and song. I remember how--
But I wander.

There came a day when all the teachers left the Institute and began the hunt for schools. I learn from hearsay (for my mother was mortally afraid of firearms) that the hunting of ducks and bears and men is wonderfully interesting, but I am sure that the man who has never hunted a country school has something to learn of the pleasures of the chase. I see now the white, hot roads lazily rise and fall and wind before me under the burning July sun; I feel the deep weariness of heart and limb as ten, eight, six miles stretch relentlessly ahead; I feel my heart sink heavily as I hear again and again, "Got a teacher? Yes." So I walked on and on--horses were too expensive--until I had wandered beyond railways, beyond stage lines, to a land of "varmints" and rattlesnakes, where the coming of a stranger was an event, and men lived and died in the shadow of one blue hill.

Sprinkled over hill and dale lay cabins and farmhouses, shut out from

the world by the forests and the rolling hills toward the east. There I found at last a little school. Josie told me of it; she was a thin, homely girl of twenty, with a dark-brown face and thick, hard hair. I had crossed the stream at Watertown, and rested under the great willows; then I had gone to the little cabin in the lot where Josie was resting on her way to town. The gaunt farmer made me welcome, and Josie, hearing my errand, told me anxiously that they wanted a school over the hill; that but once since the war had a teacher been there; that she herself longed to learn,--and thus she ran on, talking fast and loud, with much earnestness and energy.

Next morning I crossed the tall round hill, lingered to look at the blue and yellow mountains stretching toward the Carolinas, then plunged into the wood, and came out at Josie's home. It was a dull frame cottage with four rooms, perched just below the brow of the hill, amid peach-trees. The father was a quiet, simple soul, calmly ignorant, with no touch of vulgarity. The mother was different,--strong, bustling, and energetic, with a quick, restless tongue, and an ambition to live "like folks." There was a crowd of children. Two boys had gone away. There remained two growing girls; a shy midget of eight; John, tall, awkward, and eighteen; Jim, younger, quicker, and better looking; and two babies of indefinite age. Then there was Josie herself. She seemed to be the centre of the family: always busy at service, or at home, or berry-picking; a little nervous and inclined to scold, like her mother, yet faithful, too, like her father. She had about her a certain fineness, the shadow of an unconscious moral heroism that would willingly give all of life to make life broader, deeper, and fuller for her and hers. I saw much of this family afterwards, and grew to love them for their honest efforts to be decent and comfortable, and for their knowledge of their own ignorance. There was with them no affectation. The mother would scold the father for being so "easy"; Josie would roundly berate the boys for carelessness; and all knew that it was a hard thing to dig a living out of a rocky side-hill.

I secured the school. I remember the day I rode horseback out to the commissioner's house with a pleasant young white fellow who wanted the white school. The road ran down the bed of a stream; the sun laughed and the water jingled, and we rode on. "Come in," said the commissioner,--"come in. Have a seat. Yes, that certificate will do. Stay to dinner. What do you want a month?" "Oh," thought I, "this is lucky"; but even then fell the awful shadow of the Veil, for they ate first, then I--alone.

The schoolhouse was a log hut, where Colonel Wheeler used to shelter his corn. It sat in a lot behind a rail fence and thorn bushes, near the sweetest of springs. There was an entrance where a door once was, and within, a massive rickety fireplace; great chinks between the logs served as windows. Furniture was scarce. A pale blackboard crouched in the corner. My desk was made of three boards, reinforced at

critical points, and my chair, borrowed from the landlady, had to be returned every night. Seats for the children--these puzzled me much. I was haunted by a New England vision of neat little desks and chairs, but, alas! the reality was rough plank benches without backs, and at times without legs. They had the one virtue of making naps dangerous,--possibly fatal, for the floor was not to be trusted.

It was a hot morning late in July when the school opened. I trembled when I heard the patter of little feet down the dusty road, and saw the growing row of dark solemn faces and bright eager eyes facing me. First came Josie and her brothers and sisters. The longing to know, to be a student in the great school at Nashville, hovered like a star above this child-woman amid her work and worry, and she studied doggedly. There were the Dowells from their farm over toward Alexandria,--Fanny, with her smooth black face and wondering eyes; Martha, brown and dull; the pretty girl-wife of a brother, and the younger brood.

There were the Burkes,--two brown and yellow lads, and a tiny haughty-eyed girl. Fat Reuben's little chubby girl came, with golden face and old-gold hair, faithful and solemn. "Thenie was on hand early,--a jolly, ugly, good-hearted girl, who slyly dipped snuff and looked after her little bow-legged brother. When her mother could spare her, "Tildy came,--a midnight beauty, with starry eyes and tapering limbs; and her brother, correspondingly homely. And then the big boys,--the hulking Lawrences; the lazy Neills, unfathered sons of mother and daughter; Hickman, with a stoop in his shoulders; and the rest.

There they sat, nearly thirty of them, on the rough benches, their faces shading from a pale cream to a deep brown, the little feet bare and swinging, the eyes full of expectation, with here and there a twinkle of mischief, and the hands grasping Webster's blue-black spelling-book. I loved my school, and the fine faith the children had in the wisdom of their teacher was truly marvellous. We read and spelled together, wrote a little, picked flowers, sang, and listened to stories of the world beyond the hill. At times the school would dwindle away, and I would start out. I would visit Mun Eddings, who lived in two very dirty rooms, and ask why little Lugene, whose flaming face seemed ever ablaze with the dark-red hair uncombed, was absent all last week, or why I missed so often the inimitable rags of Mack and Ed. Then the father, who worked Colonel Wheeler's farm on shares, would tell me how the crops needed the boys; and the thin, slovenly mother, whose face was pretty when washed, assured me that Lugene must mind the baby. "But we'll start them again next week." When the Lawrences stopped, I knew that the doubts of the old folks about book-learning had conquered again, and so, toiling up the hill, and getting as far into the cabin as possible, I put Cicero "pro Archia Poeta" into the simplest English with local applications, and usually convinced

them--for a week or so.

On Friday nights I often went home with some of the children,--sometimes to Doc Burke's farm. He was a great, loud, thin Black, ever working, and trying to buy the seventy-five acres of hill and dale where he lived; but people said that he would surely fail, and the "white folks would get it all." His wife was a magnificent Amazon, with saffron face and shining hair, uncorseted and barefooted, and the children were strong and beautiful. They lived in a one-and-a-half-room cabin in the hollow of the farm, near the spring. The front room was full of great fat white beds, scrupulously neat; and there were bad chromos on the walls, and a tired centre-table. In the tiny back kitchen I was often invited to "take out and help" myself to fried chicken and wheat biscuit, "meat" and corn pone, string-beans and berries. At first I used to be a little alarmed at the approach of bedtime in the one lone bedroom, but embarrassment was very deftly avoided. First, all the children nodded and slept, and were stowed away in one great pile of goose feathers; next, the mother and the father discreetly slipped away to the kitchen while I went to bed; then, blowing out the dim light, they retired in the dark. In the morning all were up and away before I thought of awaking. Across the road, where fat Reuben lived, they all went outdoors while the teacher retired, because they did not boast the luxury of a kitchen.

I liked to stay with the Dowells, for they had four rooms and plenty of good country fare. Uncle Bird had a small, rough farm, all woods and hills, miles from the big road; but he was full of tales,--he preached now and then,--and with his children, berries, horses, and wheat he was happy and prosperous. Often, to keep the peace, I must go where life was less lovely; for instance, 'Tildy's mother was incorrigibly dirty, Reuben's larder was limited seriously, and herds of untamed insects wandered over the Eddingses' beds. Best of all I loved to go to Josie's, and sit on the porch, eating peaches, while the mother bustled and talked: how Josie had bought the sewing-machine; how Josie worked at service in winter, but that four dollars a month was "mighty little" wages; how Josie longed to go away to school, but that it "looked like" they never could get far enough ahead to let her; how the crops failed and the well was yet unfinished; and, finally, how "mean" some of the white folks were.

For two summers I lived in this little world; it was dull and humdrum. The girls looked at the hill in wistful longing, and the boys fretted and haunted Alexandria. Alexandria was "town,"--a straggling, lazy village of houses, churches, and shops, and an aristocracy of Toms, Dicks, and Captains. Cuddled on the hill to the north was the village of the colored folks, who lived in three- or four-room unpainted cottages, some neat and homelike, and some dirty. The dwellings were scattered rather aimlessly, but they centred about the twin temples of the hamlet, the Methodist, and the Hard-Shell Baptist churches. These,

in turn, leaned gingerly on a sad-colored schoolhouse. Hither my little world wended its crooked way on Sunday to meet other worlds, and gossip, and wonder, and make the weekly sacrifice with frenzied priest at the altar of the "old-time religion." Then the soft melody and mighty cadences of Negro song fluttered and thundered.

I have called my tiny community a world, and so its isolation made it; and yet there was among us but a half-awakened common consciousness, sprung from common joy and grief, at burial, birth, or wedding; from a common hardship in poverty, poor land, and low wages; and, above all, from the sight of the Veil that hung between us and Opportunity. All this caused us to think some thoughts together; but these, when ripe for speech, were spoken in various languages. Those whose eyes twenty-five and more years before had seen "the glory of the coming of the Lord," saw in every present hindrance or help a dark fatalism bound to bring all things right in His own good time. The mass of those to whom slavery was a dim recollection of childhood found the world a puzzling thing: it asked little of them, and they answered with little, and yet it ridiculed their offering. Such a paradox they could not understand, and therefore sank into listless indifference, or shiftlessness, or reckless bravado. There were, however, some--such as Josie, Jim, and Ben--to whom War, Hell, and Slavery were but childhood tales, whose young appetites had been whetted to an edge by school and story and half-awakened thought. Ill could they be content, born without and beyond the World. And their weak wings beat against their barriers,--barriers of caste, of youth, of life; at last, in dangerous moments, against everything that opposed even a whim.

The ten years that follow youth, the years when first the realization comes that life is leading somewhere,--these were the years that passed after I left my little school. When they were past, I came by chance once more to the walls of Fisk University, to the halls of the chapel of melody. As I lingered there in the joy and pain of meeting old school-friends, there swept over me a sudden longing to pass again beyond the blue hill, and to see the homes and the school of other days, and to learn how life had gone with my school-children; and I went.

Josie was dead, and the gray-haired mother said simply, "We've had a heap of trouble since you've been away." I had feared for Jim. With a cultured parentage and a social caste to uphold him, he might have made a venturesome merchant or a West Point cadet. But here he was, angry with life and reckless; and when Fanner Durham charged him with stealing wheat, the old man had to ride fast to escape the stones which the furious fool hurled after him. They told Jim to run away; but he would not run, and the constable came that afternoon. It grieved Josie, and great awkward John walked nine miles every day to see his little brother through the bars of Lebanon jail. At last the two came

back together in the dark night. The mother cooked supper, and Josie emptied her purse, and the boys stole away. Josie grew thin and silent, yet worked the more. The hill became steep for the quiet old father, and with the boys away there was little to do in the valley. Josie helped them to sell the old farm, and they moved nearer town. Brother Dennis, the carpenter, built a new house with six rooms; Josie toiled a year in Nashville, and brought back ninety dollars to furnish the house and change it to a home.

When the spring came, and the birds twittered, and the stream ran proud and full, little sister Lizzie, bold and thoughtless, flushed with the passion of youth, bestowed herself on the tempter, and brought home a nameless child. Josie shivered and worked on, with the vision of schooldays all fled, with a face wan and tired,--worked until, on a summer's day, some one married another; then Josie crept to her mother like a hurt child, and slept--and sleeps.

I paused to scent the breeze as I entered the valley. The Lawrences have gone,--father and son forever,--and the other son lazily digs in the earth to live. A new young widow rents out their cabin to fat Reuben. Reuben is a Baptist preacher now, but I fear as lazy as ever, though his cabin has three rooms; and little Ella has grown into a bouncing woman, and is ploughing corn on the hot hillside. There are babies a-plenty, and one half-witted girl. Across the valley is a house I did not know before, and there I found, rocking one baby and expecting another, one of my schoolgirls, a daughter of Uncle Bird Dowell. She looked somewhat worried with her new duties, but soon bristled into pride over her neat cabin and the tale of her thrifty husband, and the horse and cow, and the farm they were planning to buy.

My log schoolhouse was gone. In its place stood Progress; and Progress, I understand, is necessarily ugly. The crazy foundation stones still marked the former site of my poor little cabin, and not far away, on six weary boulders, perched a jaunty board house, perhaps twenty by thirty feet, with three windows and a door that locked. Some of the window-glass was broken, and part of an old iron stove lay mournfully under the house. I peeped through the window half reverently, and found things that were more familiar. The blackboard had grown by about two feet, and the seats were still without backs. The county owns the lot now, I hear, and every year there is a session of school. As I sat by the spring and looked on the Old and the New I felt glad, very glad, and yet--

After two long drinks I started on. There was the great double log-house on the corner. I remembered the broken, blighted family that used to live there. The strong, hard face of the mother, with its wilderness of hair, rose before me. She had driven her husband away, and while I taught school a strange man lived there, big and jovial, and people talked. I felt sure that Ben and 'Tildy would come to

naught from such a home. But this is an odd world; for Ben is a busy farmer in Smith County, "doing well, too," they say, and he had cared for little 'Tildy until last spring, when a lover married her. A hard life the lad had led, toiling for meat, and laughed at because he was homely and crooked. There was Sam Carlon, an impudent old skinflint, who had definite notions about "niggers," and hired Ben a summer and would not pay him. Then the hungry boy gathered his sacks together, and in broad daylight went into Carlon's corn; and when the hard-fisted farmer set upon him, the angry boy flew at him like a beast. Doc Burke saved a murder and a lynching that day.

The story reminded me again of the Burkes, and an impatience seized me to know who won in the battle, Doc or the seventy-five acres. For it is a hard thing to make a farm out of nothing, even in fifteen years. So I hurried on, thinking of the Burkes. They used to have a certain magnificent barbarism about them that I liked. They were never vulgar, never immoral, but rather rough and primitive, with an unconventionality that spent itself in loud guffaws, slaps on the back, and naps in the corner. I hurried by the cottage of the misborn Neill boys. It was empty, and they were grown into fat, lazy farm-hands. I saw the home of the Hickmans, but Albert, with his stooping shoulders, had passed from the world. Then I came to the Burkes' gate and peered through; the enclosure looked rough and untrimmed, and yet there were the same fences around the old farm save to the left, where lay twenty-five other acres. And lo! the cabin in the hollow had climbed the hill and swollen to a half-finished six-room cottage.

The Burkes held a hundred acres, but they were still in debt. Indeed, the gaunt father who toiled night and day would scarcely be happy out of debt, being so used to it. Some day he must stop, for his massive frame is showing decline. The mother wore shoes, but the lion-like physique of other days was broken. The children had grown up. Rob, the image of his father, was loud and rough with laughter. Birdie, my school baby of six, had grown to a picture of maiden beauty, tall and tawny. "Edgar is gone," said the mother, with head half bowed,--"gone to work in Nashville; he and his father couldn't agree."

Little Doc, the boy born since the time of my school, took me horseback down the creek next morning toward Farmer Dowell's. The road and the stream were battling for mastery, and the stream had the better of it. We splashed and waded, and the merry boy, perched behind me, chattered and laughed. He showed me where Simon Thompson had bought a bit of ground and a home; but his daughter Lana, a plump, brown, slow girl, was not there. She had married a man and a farm twenty miles away. We wound on down the stream till we came to a gate that I did not recognize, but the boy insisted that it was "Uncle Bird's." The farm was fat with the growing crop. In that little valley was a strange stillness as I rode up; for death and marriage had stolen youth and left age and childhood there. We sat and talked that night after the

chores were done. Uncle Bird was grayer, and his eyes did not see so well, but he was still jovial. We talked of the acres bought,--one hundred and twenty-five,--of the new guest-chamber added, of Martha's marrying. Then we talked of death: Fanny and Fred were gone; a shadow hung over the other daughter, and when it lifted she was to go to Nashville to school. At last we spoke of the neighbors, and as night fell, Uncle Bird told me how, on a night like that, 'Thenie came wandering back to her home over yonder, to escape the blows of her husband. And next morning she died in the home that her little bow-legged brother, working and saving, had bought for their widowed mother.

My journey was done, and behind me lay hill and dale, and Life and Death. How shall man measure Progress there where the dark-faced Josie lies? How many heartfuls of sorrow shall balance a bushel of wheat? How hard a thing is life to the lowly, and yet how human and real! And all this life and love and strife and failure,--is it the twilight of nightfall or the flush of some faint-dawning day?

Thus sadly musing, I rode to Nashville in the Jim Crow car.

SKETCHES OF THE BLACK BAPTIST CHURCH AT SAVANNAH, IN GEORGIA; AND OF THEIR MINISTER ANDREW BRYAN, EXTRACTED FROM SEVERAL LETTERS

from *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. I. Jan. 1916

Author: Various

Release Date: October 5, 2004 [EBook #13642]

Savannah, July 19, 1790, &c.

Dear Brother

"With pleasure I receive your favor of the 20th ult. more particularly, as I trust the correspondence may be of use to Brother Andrew's church; concerning the origin of which, I have taken from him the following account.

"Our Brother Andrew was one of the black hearers of George Liele," of whom an account was given before; and was hopefully converted by his preaching from chapter III. of St. John's Gospel, and a clause of verse 7, Ye must be born again; prior to the departure of George Liele for Jamaica, he came up from Tybee River, where departing vessels frequently lay ready for sea, and baptized our Brother Andrew, with a wench of the name Hagar, both belonging to Jonathan Bryan, Esq.; these were the last performances of our Brother George Liele in this quarter. About eight or nine months after his departure, Andrew began to exhort his black hearers, with a few whites. Edward Davis, Esq.; indulged him and his hearers to erect a rough building on his land at Yamacraw, in the suburbs of Savannah for a place of worship, of which they have been very artfully dispossessed. In this their beginning of worship they had frequent interruptions from the whites; as it was at a time that a number of blacks had absconded, and some had been taken away by the British. This was a plausible excuse for their wickedness in their interruptions. The whites grew more and more inveterate; taking numbers of them before magistrates--they were imprisoned and whipped. Sampson, a brother of Andrew, belonging to the same master, was converted about a year after him, and continued with him in all their persecutions, and does until now. These, with many others, were twice imprisoned, and about fifty were severely whipped, particularly Andrew, who was cut and bled abundantly, while he was under their lashes; Brother Hambleton says, he held up his hand, and told his persecutors that he rejoiced not only to be whipped, but would freely suffer death for the cause of Jesus Christ. "The chief justice Henry Osborne, Esq.; James Habersham, Esq.;[1] and David Montague, Esq.; were their examiners, and released them. Their kind master also interceded for them; and was much affected and grieved at their punishment." Brother Hambleton was also an advocate for them; and further says, that at one of their examinations George Walton, Esq.; spoke freely in favour of the sufferers, saying, that such treatment would be condemned even among

barbarians. "The chief justice _Osborne_ then gave them liberty to continue their worship between sunrising and sun set; and their indulgent _master_ told the magistrate, that he would give them the liberty of his own _house or his barn_, at a place called Brampton, about three miles from town, and that they should not be interrupted in their worship. In consequence hereof, they made use of their masters _barn_, where they had a number of hearers, with little or no interruption, for about two years. During the time of worship at Brampton Brother Thomas Burton, an elderly baptist preacher, paid them a visit, examined and baptized about _eighteen_ blacks: at another period while there they received a visit from our brother _Abraham Marshall_[2] who examined and baptized about forty and gave them two certificates from under his hand;" copies of which follow:

This is to _certify_, that upon examination into the experiences and characters of a number of _Ethiopians_, and adjacent to Savannah, it appears that God has brought them out of darkness into the light of the Gospel, and given them fellowship one with the other; believing it is the will of Christ, we have constituted them a church of Jesus Christ, to keep up his worship and ordinances.

(Signed) A. Marshall, V.D.M.

Jan. 19, 1788.

This is to certify, that the Ethiopian church of Jesus Christ at Savannah, have called their beloved _Andrew_ to the work of the ministry. We have examined into his qualifications, and believing it to be the will of the great Head of the church, we have appointed him to preach the Gospel, and to administer the ordinances, as God in his providence may call.

(Signed) A. Marshall, V.D.M.

Jan. 20, 1788.

"After the death of their master his son, Dr. _William Bryan_, generously continued them the use of the _barn_ for worship, until the estate was divided among the family. Our Brother _Andrew_, by consent of parties, purchased his freedom, bought a lot at Yamacraw, and built a residence near the dwelling house which their master had given _Sampson_ liberty to build on his lot; and which have ever been made use of for worship. But by the division of their master's estate, the lot whereon _Sampson_ had built a house to live in, and which until this time continues to be used for worship, by _Andrew_, fell into the hands of an attorney, who married a daughter of the deceased Mr. Bryan, and receives

no less than 12 l. a year for it. _Sampson_ serves as a clerk, but frequently exhorts in the absence of his brother who has his appointments in different places to worship.

"Brother _Andrew's_ account of his number in full communion is TWO HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIVE, and about THREE HUNDRED AND FIFTY have been received as converted followers, many of whom have not permission" from their owners "to be baptized.--The whole number is judged to be about five hundred and seventy-five, from the towns being taken to this present July. I have consulted brother _Hambleton_ , who thinks they have need of a few Bibles, the Baptist Confession of Faith, and Catechism; Wilson on Baptism, some of Bunyan's works, or any other that your wisdom may think useful to an illerate [sic] people. They all join in prayers for you and yours and beg your intercession at the throne of grace for them, as well as for the small number of whites that dwell here; and among them I hope you will not forget your poor unworthy brother, and believe me, with sincere affections and brotherly love, your in the bonds of the Gospel,

(Signed) Jonathan Clarke[3]

Concerning the church at Savannah, the late Rev. Mr. Joseph Cook, of the Euhaw, upper Indian land, thus writes: "From the enclosed you will see how it became a church, and what they have suffered, which is extremely affecting, but they now begin to rise from obscurity and to appear great. I have some acquaintance with their pastor, and have heard him preach; his _gifts are small_, but he is _clear in the grand doctrines_ of the Gospel.--I believe him to be _truly pious_ and he has been the instrument of doing more good among the poor slaves than all the learned doctors in America."

The friends of our adorable Redeemer will, no doubt, rejoice to find that this large body of Christians negroes, under the patronage of some of the most respectable persons in their city, "have opened a subscription for the erecting of a place of worship in the city of Savannah, for the society of black people of the Baptist denomination--the property to be vested in the hands of seven or more persons in trust for the church and congregation."

Their case[4] is sent to England, recommended by
J. JOHNSON,[5] Minister of the Union Church.
JOHN HAMILTON.
EBENEZER HILLS.
JOSEPH WATTS.
D. MOSES VALLOTTON.
JOHN MILLENE.
ABRAHAM LEGGETT.

Since the preceding account has been in the press, other letters have been received, of which the following is an extract.

Kingston, Jamaica, May 18, 1792.

Rev. and Dear Sir,

In answer to yours I wrote December 18 last, and as I have not received a line from you since, I send this, not knowing but the other was miscarried. Mr. Green has called upon me, and very kindly offered his service to deliver a letter from me into your hands; he also advised me to send you a copy of our church covenant, which I have done: being a collection of some of the principal texts of scripture which we observe, both in America and this country, for the direction of our practice. It is read once a month here on sacrament meetings, that our members may examine if they live according to all those laws which they profess, covenanted and agreed to; by this means our church is kept in scriptural subjection. As I observe in my last the chiefest part of our society are poor illiterate slaves, some living on sugar estates, some on mountains, pens, and other settlements, that have no learning, no not to know so much as a letter in the book; but the reading this covenant once a month, when all are met together from the different parts of the island, keeps them in mind of the commandments of God. And by shewing the same to the gentlemen of the legislature, and the justices, and magistrates, when I applied for a sanction, it gave them general satisfaction; and wherever a negro servant is to be admitted, their owners, after the perusal of it, are better satisfied. We are this day raising the roof on the walls of our meeting house; the height of the walls from the foundation is seventeen feet. I have a right to praise God, and glorify him for the manifold blessings I have received, and do still receive from him. I have full liberty from _Spanish Town_, the capital of this country, to preach the Gospel throughout the Island: the Lord is blessing the work everywhere, and believers are added daily to the church. My tongue is not able to express the goodness of the Lord. As our meeting house is out of town "(about a mile and a half)," I have a steeple on it, to have a bell to give notice to our people and more particularly to the owners of Slaves that are in our society, that they may know the hour on which we meet, and be satisfied that our servants return in due time; for which reason I shall be greatly obliged to you to send me out, as soon as possible, a bell that can be heard about two _miles_ distance, with the price. I have one at present, but it is rather small. The slaves may then be permitted to come and return in due time, for at present we meet very irregular in respect to hours. I remain, with the utmost regards, love and esteem,

Rev. Sir, yours, &c.

George Liele.

Copy of a Recommendatory Letter of Hannah Williams, a Negro Woman, in London. It is all in print, except the part of it which now appears in Italics.

Kingston, Jamaica, we that are of the Baptist Religion, being separated from all churches, excepting they are of the same faith and order after Jesus Christ, according to the scriptures, do certify, that our beloved *_Sister Hannah Williams, during the time she was a member of the Church at Savannah, until the evacuation, did walk as a_ faithful, well-behaved Christian, and to recommend her to join any church of the same faith and order. Given under my hand this 21st day of _December_, in the year of our Lord, 1791.*

George Liele.

-- *_Baptist Annual Register_*, 1790-1793, pages 339-344.

THE PASSING TRADITION AND THE AFRICAN CIVILIZATION

by MONROE N. WORK

from *The Journal of Negro History, Vol. I. Jan. 1916*

A close examination shows that what we know about the Negro both of the present and the past vitally affects our opinions concerning him. Men's beliefs concerning things are to a large extent determined by where they live and what has been handed down to them. We believe in a hell of roaring flames where in the fiercest of heat the souls of the wicked are subject to eternal burnings. This idea of hell was evolved in the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula where heat is one of the greatest forces of nature with which man has to contend. Among the native tribes of Northern Siberia dwelling in the regions of perpetual ice and snow, hell is a place filled with great chunks of ice upon which the souls of the wicked are placed and there subjected to eternal freezings. This idea of hell was evolved in the regions where man is in a continual battle with the cold.

The beliefs of Negroes concerning themselves have to a large extent been made for them. The reader no doubt will be interested to know that the prevailing notions concerning the inferiority of the Negro grew up to a large extent as the concomitant to Negro slavery in this country. The bringing of the first Negroes from Africa as slaves was justified on the grounds that they were heathen. It was not right, it was argued, for Christians to enslave Christians, but they could enslave heathen, who as a result would have an opportunity to become Christians. These Negro slaves did actually become Christians and as a result the colonists were forced to find other grounds to justify their continuation of the system. The next argument was that they were different from white people. Here we have a large part of the beginnings of the doctrine of the inferiority of the Negro.

When, about 1830, anti-slavery agitation arose in this country, a new set of arguments were brought forward to justify slavery. First in importance were those taken from the Bible. Science also was called upon and brought forward a large number of facts to demonstrate that by nature the Negro was especially fitted to be a slave. It happened that about this time anthropology was being developed. Racial differences were some of the things which especially interested scientists in this field. The races were defined according to certain physical characteristics. These, it was asserted, determined the superiority or inferiority of races. The true Negro race, said the early anthropologists, had characteristics which especially indicated its inferiority. Through our geographies, histories and encyclopedias we have become familiar with representations of this so-called true Negro, whose chief characteristics were a black skin, woolly hair, protuberant lips and a receding forehead. Caricaturists seized upon these characteristics and popularized them in cartoons, in songs and in other ways. Thus it happened that the Negro, through the descriptions that he got of himself, has come largely to believe in his inherent inferiority and that to attain superiority he must become like the white man in color,

in achievements and, in fact, along all lines.

In recent years it has been asked, "Why cannot the Negro attain superiority along lines of his own," that is, instead of simply patterning after what the white man has done, why cannot the Negro through music, art, history, and science, make his own special contributions to the progress of the world? This question has arisen because in the fields of science and history there have been brought forward a number of facts which prove this possibility. First of all, the leading scientists in the field of anthropology are telling us that while there are differences of races, there are no characteristics which per se indicate that one race is inferior or superior to another. The existing differences are differences in kind not in value. On the other hand, whatever superiority one race has attained over another has been largely due to environment.

A German writer in a discussion of the origin of African civilizations said some time ago "What bold investigators, great pioneers, still find to tell us in civilizations nearer home, proves more and more clearly that we are ignorant of hoary Africa. Somewhat of its present, perhaps, we know, but of its past little. Open an illustrated geography and compare the 'Type of the African Negro,' the bluish-black fellow of the protuberant lips, the flattened nose, the stupid expression and the short curly hair, with the tall bronze figures from Dark Africa with which we have of late become familiar, their almost fine-cut features, slightly arched nose, long hair, etc., and you have an example of the problems pressing for solution. In other respects, too, the genuine African of the interior bears no resemblance to the accepted Negro type as it figures on drug and cigar store signs, wearing a shabby stovepipe hat, plaid trousers, and a vari-colored coat. A stroll through the corridors of the Berlin Museum of Ethnology teaches that the real African need by no means resort to the rags and tatters of bygone European splendor. He has precious ornaments of his own, of ivory and plumes, fine plaited willow ware, weapons of superior workmanship. Justly can it be demanded 'What sort of civilization is this? Whence does it come?'"

It is also pointed out that one of the most important contributions to the civilization of mankind was very probably made by the Negro race. This was the invention of the smelting of iron. The facts brought forward to support this view are: that no iron was smelted in Europe before 900 B.C.; that about 3000 B.C., there began to appear on the Egyptian monuments pictures of Africans bringing iron from the South to Egypt; that at a time considerably later than this iron implements began to appear in Asia; that there is no iron ore in Egypt; and that in Negro Africa iron ore is abundant. In many places it is found on top of the ground and in some parts it can be melted by simply placing a piece of ore in the fire very much as you would a potato to be roasted.

Studies in the fields of ancient and medieval history are also showing that in the past there were in Negro Africa civilizations of probable

indigenous origin which attained importance enough to be mentioned in the writings of the historians and poets of those periods. The seat of one of the highest of these civilizations was Ethiopia. Here the Negro nation attained the greatest fame. As early as 2,500 years before the birth of Christ the Ethiopians appeared to have had a considerable civilization. It was well known to the writers of the Bible and is referred to therein some forty-nine times. In Genesis we read of Cush, the eldest son of Ham. Cush is the Hebrew word for black and means the same as Ethiopia. One of the most famous sons of Cush was Nimrod, whom the Bible mentions as being "a mighty hunter before the Lord; whereof it is said, like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the Lord." The Bible refers to Ethiopia as being far distant from Palestine. In the book of Isaiah we read "the land of the rustling of wings which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia that sendeth ambassadors by the sea." The rivers of Ethiopia mentioned in Isaiah are the upper tributaries of the Nile, the Atbara, the Blue Nile and the Sobat.

The later capital of Ethiopia was Meroe. Recent excavations have shown Meroe to have been a city larger than Memphis. The Temple of Ammon, where kings were crowned, was one of the largest in the valley of the Nile. The great walls of cut stones were 15 feet thick and 30 feet high. Heaps of iron-slag and furnaces for smelting iron were discovered, and there were magnificent quays and landing places on the river side, for the export of iron. Excavations have also shown that for 150 years Egypt was a dependency of Ethiopia. The kings of the twenty-third and twenty-fourth Egyptian dynasties were really governors appointed by Ethiopian overlords, while the twenty-fifth dynasty was founded by the Ethiopian king, Sabako, in order to check Assyrian aggression. Palestine was enabled to hold out against Assyria by Ethiopian help. Sennacherib's attempt to capture Jerusalem and carry the Jews into captivity, was frustrated by the army of the Ethiopian king, Taharka. The nation and religion of Judah were thus preserved from being absorbed in heathen lands like the lost Ten Tribes. The Negro soldiers of the Sudan saved the Jewish religion.

The old Greek writers were well acquainted with Ethiopia. According to them in the most ancient times there existed to the South of Egypt a nation and a land designated as Ethiopia. This was the land where the people with the sunburnt faces dwelt. The Greek poet, Homer, mentions the Ethiopians as dwelling at the uttermost limits of the earth, where they enjoyed personal intercourse with the gods. In one place Homer said that Neptune, the god of the sea, "had gone to feast with the Ethiopians who dwell afar off, the Ethiopians who are divided into two parts, the most distant of men, some at the setting of the sun, others at the rising." Herodotus, the Greek historian, described the Ethiopians as long lived and their country as extending to the Southern Sea.

The great fame of the Ethiopians is thus sketched by the eminent historian, Heeren, who in his historical researches says: "In the earliest traditions of nearly all the more civilized nations of antiquity, the name of this distant people is found. The annals of the Egyptian priests were full

of them; the nations of inner Asia, on the Euphrates and Tigris, have interwoven the fictions of the Ethiopians with their own traditions of the conquests and wars of their heroes; and, at a period equally remote, they glimmer in Greek mythology. When the Greeks scarcely knew Italy and Sicily by name, the Ethiopians were celebrated in the verses of their poets; they spoke of them as the 'remotest nation,' the 'most just of men,' the 'favorites of the gods,' The lofty inhabitants of Olympus journey to them and take part in their feasts; their sacrifices are the most agreeable of all that mortals can offer them. And when the faint gleam of tradition and fable gives way to the clear light of history, the luster of the Ethiopians is not diminished. They still continue the object of curiosity and admiration; and the pens of cautious, clear-sighted historians often place them in the highest rank of knowledge and civilization."

Of these facts most modern historians know but little and Negroes in general almost nothing. For example, how many have ever heard of Al-Bekri, the Arab writer, who in the eleventh century wrote a description of the Western Sudan of such importance that it gained him the title of "The Historian of Negro Land"? How much, by means of research, might be learned of the town of Ghana situate on the banks of the Niger, which the historian Al-Bekri described as a meeting place for commercial caravans from all parts of the world? This town, he said, contained schools and centers of learning. It was the resort of the learned, the rich, and the pious of all nations. Likewise, most of us have never heard perhaps of another Arab writer, Iben Khaldun, who in writing about the middle of the fourteenth century of Melle, another of the kingdoms of the Sudan, reported that caravans from Egypt consisting of twelve thousand laden camels passed every year through one town on the eastern border of the empire on their way to the capital of the nation. The load of a camel was three hundred pounds. 12,000 camel loads amounted, therefore, to something like 1,600 tons of merchandise. At this time we are told that there was probably not a ship in any of the merchant navies of the world which could carry one hundred tons. 250 years later the average tonnage of the vessels of Spain was 300 tons and that of the English much less. The largest ship which Queen Elizabeth had in her navy, the Great Mary, had a capacity of a thousand tons; but it was considered an exception and the marvel of the age.

Another thing that is not generally known is the importance to which some of these Negro kingdoms of the Western Sudan attained during the middle ages and the first centuries of the modern era. In size and permanency they compared favorably with the most advanced nations of Europe. The kingdom of Melle of which the historian, Iben Khaldun, wrote, had an area of over 1,000 miles in extent and existed for 250 years. It was the first of the kingdoms of the Western Sudan to be received on equal terms with the contemporary white nations. The greatest of all the Sudan states was the kingdom of Songhay which, in its golden age, had an area almost equal to that of the United States and existed from about 750 A.D. to 1591. There is a record of the kings of Songhay in regular succession for almost 900 years. The length of the life of the Songhay empire coincides almost

exactly with the life of Rome from its foundation as a republic to its downfall as an empire.

The greatest evidences of the high state of civilization which the Sudan had in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were the attention that was paid to education and the unusual amount of learning that existed there. The university of Sankore at Timbuctu was a very active center of learning. It was in correspondence with the universities of North Africa and Egypt. It was in touch with the universities of Spain. In the sixteenth century Timbuctu had a large learned class living at ease and busily occupied with the elucidation of intellectual and religious problems. The town swarmed with students. Law, literature, grammar, theology and the natural sciences were studied. The city of Melle had a regular school of science. One distinguished geographer is mentioned, and allusions to surgical science show that the old maxim of the Arabian schools, "He who studies anatomy pleases God," was not forgotten. One of these writers mentions that his brother came from Jenne to Timbuctu to undergo an operation for cataract of the eyes at the hands of a celebrated surgeon there. It is said that the operation was wholly successful. The appearance of comets, so amazing to Europe of the Middle Ages and at the present time to the ignorant, was by these learned blacks noted calmly as a matter of scientific interest. Earthquakes and eclipses excited no great surprise.

The renowned writer of the Sudan was Abdurrahman Essadi. He was born in Timbuctu in 1596. He came of learned and distinguished ancestors. He is chief author of the history of Sudan. The book is said to be a wonderful document. The narrative deals mainly with the modern history of the Songhay Empire, and relates the rise of this black civilization through the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and its decadence up to the middle of the seventeenth century. The noted traveller, Barth, was of the opinion that the book forms one of the most important additions that the present age has made to the history of mankind. The work is especially valuable for the unconscious light which it throws upon the life, manners, politics, and literature of the country. It presents a vivid picture of the character of the men with whom it deals. It is sometimes called the Epic of the Sudan.

From this brief sketch which I have given of the African in ancient and medieval times it is clear that Negroes should not despise the rock from which they were hewn. As a race they have a past which is full of interest. It is worthy of serious study. From it we can draw inspiration; for it appears that not all black men everywhere throughout the ages have been "hewers of wood and drawers of water." On the contrary, through long periods of time there were powerful black nations which have left the records of their achievements and of which we are just now beginning to learn a little. This little, however, which we have learned teaches us that the Negroes of today should work and strive. Along their own special line and in their own peculiar way they should endeavor to make contributions to civilization. Their achievements can be such that once more black will be

dignified and the fame of Ethiopia again spread throughout the world.

THE PRALINE WOMAN

from *The Goodness of St. Rocque and Other Stories*

Author: Alice Dunbar

Posting Date: July 26, 2008 [EBook #688]

The praline woman sits by the side of the Archbishop's quaint little old chapel on Royal Street, and slowly waves her latanier fan over the pink and brown wares.

"Pralines, pralines. Ah, ma'amzelle, you buy? S'il vous plait, ma'amzelle, ces pralines, dey be fine, ver' fresh.

"Mais non, maman, you are not sure?

"Sho', chile, ma bebe, ma petite, she put dese up hissef. He's hans' so small, ma'amzelle, lak you's, mais brune. She put dese up dis morn'. You tak' none? No husban' fo' you den!

"Ah, ma petite, you tak'? Cinq sous, bebe, may le bon Dieu keep you good!

"Mais oui, madame, I know you etranger. You don' look lak dese New Orleans peop'. You lak' dose Yankee dat come down 'fo' de war."

Ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong, chimes the Cathedral bell across Jackson Square, and the praline woman crosses herself.

"Hail, Mary, full of grace—

"Pralines, madame? You buy lak' dat? Dix sous, madame, an' one lil' piece fo' lagniappe fo' madame's lil' bebe. Ah, c'est bon!

"Pralines, pralines, so fresh, so fine! M'sieu would lak' some fo' he's lil' gal' at home? Mais non, what's dat you say? She's daid! Ah, m'sieu, 'tis my lil' gal what died long year ago. Misere, misere!

"Here come dat lazy Indien squaw. What she good fo', anyhow? She jes' sit lak dat in de French Market an' sell her file, an' sleep, sleep, sleep, lak' so in he's blanket. Hey, dere, you, Tonita, how goes you' beezness?

"Pralines, pralines! Holy Father, you give me dat blessin' sho'? Tak' one, I know you lak dat w'ite one. It tas' good, I know, bien.

"Pralines, madame? I lak' you' face. What fo' you wear black? You' lil' boy daid? You tak' one, jes' see how it tas'. I had one lil' boy once, he jes' grow 'twell he's big lak' dis, den one day he tak' sick an' die. Oh, madame, it mos' brek my po' heart. I burn candle in St. Rocque, I say my beads, I sprinkle holy water roun' he's bed; he jes' lay so, he's eyes turn up, he say 'Maman, maman,' den he die! Madame, you tak' one. Non, non, no l'argent, you tak' one fo' my lil' boy's sake.

"Pralines, pralines, m'sieu? Who mak' dese? My lil' gal, Didele, of co'se. Non, non, I don't mak' no mo'. Po' Tante Marie get too ol'. Didele? She's one lil' gal I 'dopt. I see her one day in de strit. He walk so; hit col' she shiver, an' I say, 'Where you gone, lil' gal?' and he can' tell. He jes' cripp close to me, an' cry so!

Den I tak' her home wid me, and she say he's name Didele. You see dey wa'nt nobody dere. My lil' gal, she's daid of de yellow fever; my lil' boy, he's daid, po' Tante Marie all alone. Didele, she grow fine, she keep house an' mek' pralines. Den, when night come, she sit wid he's guitar an' sing,

"Tu l'aime ces trois jours,
Tu l'aime ces trois jours,
Ma coeur a toi,
Ma coeur a toi,
Tu l'aime ces trois jours!"

"Ah, he's fine gal, is Didele!"

"Pralines, pralines! Dat lil' cloud, h'it look lak' rain, I hope no."

"Here come dat lazy l'ishman down de strit. I don't lak' l'ishman, me, non, dey so funny. One day one l'ishman, he say to me, 'Auntie, what fo' you talk so?' and I jes' say back, 'What fo' you say "Faith an' be jabers"?' Non, I don' lak l'ishman, me!"

"Here come de rain! Now I got fo' to go. Didele, she be wait fo' me. Down h'it come! H'it fall in de Meesseesip, an' fill up—up—so, clean to de levee, den we have big crivasse, an' po' Tante Marie float away. Bon jour, madame, you come again? Pralines! Pralines!"

HOT-FOOT HANNIBAL

from *The Conjure Woman*

Author: Charles W. Chesnutt

Release Date: March 22, 2004 [EBook #11666]

"I hate you and despise you! I wish never to see you or speak to you again!"

"Very well; I will take care that henceforth you have no opportunity to do either."

These words—the first in the passionately vibrant tones of my sister-in-law, and the latter in the deeper and more restrained accents of an angry man—startled me from my nap. I had been dozing in my hammock on the front piazza, behind the honeysuckle vine. I had been faintly aware of a buzz of conversation in the parlor, but had not at all awakened to its import until these sentences fell, or, I might rather say, were hurled upon my ear. I presume the young people had either not seen me lying there,—the Venetian blinds opening from the parlor windows upon the piazza were partly closed on account of the heat,—or else in their excitement they had forgotten my proximity.

I felt somewhat concerned. The young man, I had remarked, was proud, firm, jealous of the point of honor, and, from my observation of him, quite likely to resent to the bitter end what he deemed a slight or an injustice. The girl, I knew, was quite as high-spirited as young Murchison. I feared she was not so just, and hoped she would prove more yielding. I knew that her affections were strong and enduring, but that her temperament was capricious, and her sunniest moods easily overcast by some small cloud of jealousy or pique. I had never imagined, however, that she was capable of such intensity as was revealed by these few words of hers. As I say, I felt concerned. I had learned to like Malcolm Murchison, and had heartily consented to his marriage with my ward; for it was in that capacity that I had stood for a year or two to my wife's younger sister, Mabel. The match thus rudely broken off had promised to be another link binding me to the kindly Southern people among whom I had not long before taken up my residence.

Young Murchison came out of the door, cleared the piazza in two strides without seeming aware of my presence, and went off down the lane at a furious pace. A few moments later Mabel began playing the piano loudly, with a touch that indicated anger and pride and independence and a dash of exultation, as though she were really glad that she had driven away forever the young man whom the day before she had loved with all the ardor of a first passion.

I hoped that time might heal the breach and bring the two young people together again. I told my wife what I had overheard. In return she gave me Mabel's version of the affair.

"I do not see how it can ever be settled," my wife said. "It is something more than a mere lovers' quarrel. It began, it is true, because she found fault with him for going to church with that hateful Branson girl. But before it ended there were things said that no woman of any spirit could stand. I am afraid it is all over between them."

I was sorry to hear this. In spite of the very firm attitude taken by my wife and her sister, I still hoped that the quarrel would be made up within a day or two. Nevertheless, when a week had passed with no word from young Murchison, and with no sign of relenting on Mabel's part, I began to think myself mistaken.

One pleasant afternoon, about ten days after the rupture, old Julius drove the rockaway up to the piazza, and my wife, Mabel, and I took our seats for a drive to a neighbor's vineyard, over on the Lumberton plank-road.

"Which way shall we go," I asked,—"the short road or the long one?"

"I guess we had better take the short road," answered my wife. "We will get there sooner."

"It's a mighty fine drible roun' by de big road, Mis' Annie," observed Julius, "en it doan take much longer to git dere."

"No," said my wife, "I think we will go by the short road. There is a bay-tree in blossom near the mineral spring, and I wish to get some of the flowers."

"I 'spec's you 'd fin' some bay-trees 'long de big road, ma'm," suggested Julius.

"But I know about the flowers on the short road, and they are the ones I want."

We drove down the lane to the highway, and soon struck into the short road leading past the mineral spring. Our route lay partly through a swamp, and on each side the dark, umbrageous foliage, unbroken by any clearing, lent to the road solemnity, and to the air a refreshing coolness. About half a mile from the house, and about half-way to the mineral spring, we stopped at the tree of which my wife had spoken, and reaching up to the low-hanging boughs, I gathered a dozen of the fragrant white flowers. When I resumed my seat in the rockaway, Julius started the mare. She went on for a few rods, until we had reached the edge of a branch crossing the road, when she stopped short.

"Why did you stop, Julius?" I asked.

"I did n', suh," he replied. "'T wuz de mare stop'. G' 'long dere, Lucy! Wat you mean by dis foolis'ness?"

Julius jerked the reins and applied the whip lightly, but the mare did not stir.

"Perhaps you had better get down and lead her," I suggested. "If you get her started, you can cross on the log and keep your feet dry."

Julius alighted, took hold of the bridle, and vainly essayed to make the mare move. She planted her feet with even more evident obstinacy.

"I don't know what to make of this," I said. "I have never known her to balk before. Have you, Julius?"

"No, suh," replied the old man, "I neber has. It's a cu'ous thing ter me, suh."

"What's the best way to make her go?"

"I 'spec's, suh, dat ef I'd tu'n her 'roun', she'd go de udder way."

"But we want her to go this way."

"Well, suh, I 'low ef we des set heah fo' er fibe minutes, she'll sta't up by herse'f."

"All right," I rejoined; "it is cooler here than any place I have struck today. We'll let her stand for a while, and see what she does."

We had sat in silence for a few minutes, when Julius suddenly ejaculated, "Uh huh! I knows w'y dis mare doan go. It des flash' 'cross my recommemb'ance."

"Why is it, Julius?" I inquired.

"'Ca'se she sees Chloe."

"Where is Chloe?" I demanded.

"Chloe's done be'n dead dese fo'ty years er mo'," the old man returned. "Her ha'nt is settin' ober yander on de udder side er de branch, unner dat wilier-tree, dis blessed minute."

"Why, Julius!" said my wife, "do you see the haunt?"

"No'm," he answered, shaking his head, "I doan see 'er, but de mare sees 'er."

"How do you know?" I inquired.

"Well, suh, dis yer is a gray hoss, en dis yer is a Friday; en a gray hoss kin alluz see a ha'nt w'at walks on Friday."

"Who was Chloe?" said Mabel.

"And why does Chloe's haunt walk?" asked my wife.

"It's all in de tale, ma'm," Julius replied, with a deep sigh. "It's all in de tale."

"Tell us the tale," I said. "Perhaps, by the time you get through, the haunt will go away and the mare will cross."

I was willing to humor the old man's fancy. He had not told us a story for some time; and the dark and solemn swamp around us; the amber-colored stream flowing silently and sluggishly at our feet, like the waters of Lethe; the heavy, aromatic scent of the bays, faintly suggestive of funeral wreaths, all made the place an ideal one for a ghost story.

"Chloe," Julius began in a subdued tone, "use' ter b'long ter ole Mars' Dugal' McAdoo,—my ole marster. She wuz a lackly gal en a smart gal, en ole mis' tuk her up ter de big house, en l'arnt her ter wait on de w'ite folks, 'tel bimeby she come ter be mis's own maid, en 'peared ter 'low she run de house herse'f, ter heah her talk erbout it. I wuz a young boy den, en use' ter wuk 'bout de stables, so I knowed eve'ythin' dat wuz gwine on 'roun' de plantation.

"Well, one time Mars' Dugal' wanted a house boy, en sont down ter de qua'ters fer ter hab Jeff en Hannibal come up ter de big house nex' mawnin'. Ole marster en ole mis' look' de two boys ober, en 'sco'sed wid deyse'ves fer a little w'ile, en den Mars' Dugal' sez, sezee:—

"We lacks Hannibal de bes', en we gwine ter keep him. Heah, Hannibal, you'll wuk at de house fum now on. En ef you er a good nigger en min's yo' bizness, I'll gib you Chloe fer a wife nex' spring. You other nigger, you Jeff, you kin go back ter de qua'ters. We ain' gwine ter need you.'

"Now Chloe had be'n stan'in' dere behin' ole mis' dyoin' all er dis yer talk, en Chloe made up her min' fum de ve'y fus' minute she sot eyes on dem two dat she did n' lack dat nigger Hannibal, en wa'n't neber gwine keer fer 'im, en she wuz des ez sho' dat she lack' Jeff, en wuz gwine ter set sto' by 'im, whuther Mars' Dugal' tuk 'im in de big house er no; en so co'se Chloe wuz monst'us sorry w'en ole Mars' Dugal' tuk Hannibal en sont Jeff back. So she slip' roun' de house en waylaid Jeff on de way back ter de qua'ters, en tol' 'im not ter be down-hea'ted, fer she wuz gwine ter see ef she could n' fin' some way er 'nuther ter git rid er dat nigger Hannibal, en git Jeff up ter de house in his place.

"De noo house boy kotch' on monst'us fas', en it wa'n't no time ha'dly befo' Mars' Dugal' en ole mis' bofe 'mence' ter 'low Hannibal wuz de bes' house boy dey eber had. He wuz peart en soopl', quick ez lightnin', en sha'p ez a razor. But Chloe did n' lack his ways. He wuz so sho' he wuz gwine ter git 'er in de spring, dat he did n' 'pear ter 'low he had ter do any co'tin', en w'en he 'd run 'cross Chloe 'bout de house, he 'd swell roun' 'er in a biggity way en say:—

"Come heah en kiss me, honey. You gwine ter be mine in de spring. You doan 'pear ter be ez fon' er me ez you oughter be.'

"Chloe did n' keer nuffin fer Hannibal, en had n' keered nuffin fer 'im, en she sot des ez much sto' by Jeff ez she did de day she fus' laid eyes on 'im. En de mo' fermilyus dis yer Hannibal got, de mo' Chloe let her min' run on Jeff, en one ebenin' she went down ter de qua'ters en watch', 'tel she got a chance fer ter talk wid 'im by hisse'f. En she tol' Jeff fer ter go down en see ole Aun' Peggy, de cunjuh 'oman down by de Wim'l'ton Road, en ax her ter gib 'im sump'n ter he'p git Hannibal out'n de big house, so de w'ite folks u'd sen' fer Jeff ag'in. En bein' ez Jeff did n' hab nuffin ter gib Aun' Peggy, Chloe gun 'im a silber dollah en a silk han'kercher fer ter pay her wid, fer Aun' Peggy neber lack ter wuk fer nobody fer nuffin.

"So Jeff slip' off down ter Aun' Peggy's one night, en gun 'er de present he brung, en tol' 'er all 'bout 'im en Chloe en Hannibal, en ax' 'er ter he'p 'im out. Aun' Peggy tol' 'im she 'd wuk 'er roots, en fer 'im ter come back de nex' night, en she 'd tell 'im w'at she c'd do fer 'im.

"So de nex' night Jeff went back, en Aun' Peggy gun 'im a baby doll, wid a body made out'n a piece er co'n-stalk, en wid splinters fer a'ms en laigs, en a head made out'n elderberry peth, en two little red peppers fer feet.

"Dis yer baby doll,' sez she, 'is Hannibal. Dis yer peth head is Hannibal's head, en dese yer pepper feet is Hannibal's feet. You take dis en hide it unner de house, on de sill unner de do', whar Hannibal 'll hafter walk ober it eve'y day. En ez long ez Hannibal comes anywhar nigh dis baby doll, he'll be des lack it is,—light-headed en hot-footed; en ef dem two things doan git 'im inter trouble mighty soon, den I'm no cunjuh 'oman. But w'en you git Hannibal out'n de house, en git all th'oo wid dis baby doll, you mus' fetch it back ter me, fer it's monst'us powerful goopher, en is liable ter make mo' trouble ef you leabe it layin' roun'.'

"Well, Jeff tuk de baby doll, en slip' up ter de big house, en whistle' ter Chloe, en w'en she come out he tol' 'er w'at ole Aun' Peggy had said. En Chloe showed 'im how ter git unner de house, en w'en he had put de cunjuh doll on de sill, he went 'long back ter de qua'ters—en des waited.

"Nex' day, sho' 'nuff, de goopher 'mence' ter wuk. Hannibal sta'ted in de house soon in de mawnin' wid a armful er wood ter make a fire, en he had n' mo' d'n got 'cross de do'-sill befo' his feet begun ter bu'n so dat he drap' de armful er wood on de flo' en woke ole mis' up a' hour sooner 'n yushal, en co'se ole mis' did n' lack dat, en spoke sha'p erbout it.

"W'en dinner-time come, en Hannibal wuz help'n' de cook kyar de dinner f'm de kitchen inter de big house, en wuz gittin' close ter de do' whar he had ter go in, his feet sta'ted ter bu'n en his head begun ter swim, en he let de big dish er chicken en dumplin's fall right down in de dirt, in de middle er de ya'd, en de w'ite folks had ter make dey dinner dat day off'n col' ham en sweet'n' 'taters.

"De nex' mawnin' he overslep' hisse'f, en got inter mo' trouble. Atter breakfus', Mars' Dugal' sont 'im ober ter Mars' Marrabo Utley's fer ter borry a monkey wrench. He oughter be'n back in ha'f a' hour, but he come pokin' home 'bout dinner-time wid a screw-driver stidder a monkey wrench. Mars' Dugal' sont ernudder nigger back wid de screw-driver, en Hannibal did n' git no dinner. 'Long in de atternoon, ole mis' sot Hannibal ter weedin' de flowers in de front gya'den, en Hannibal dug up all de bulbs ole mis' had sont erway fer, en paid a lot er money fer, en tuk 'em down ter de hawg-pen by de ba'nya'd, en fed 'em ter de hawgs. Wen ole mis' come out in de cool er de ebenin', en seed w'at Hannibal had done, she wuz mos' crazy, en she wrote a note en sont Hannibal down ter de oberseah wid it.

"But w'at Hannibal got fum de oberseah did n' 'pear ter do no good. Eve'y now en den 'is feet 'd 'mence ter torment 'im, en 'is min' 'u'd git all mix' up, en his conduc' kep' gittin' wusser en wusser, 'tel fin'lly de w'ite folks could n' stan' it no longer, en Mars' Dugal' tuk Hannibal back down ter de qua'ters.

"Mr. Smif,' sez Mars' Dugal' ter de oberseah, 'dis yer nigger has done got so triflin' yer lately dat we can't keep 'im at de house no mo', en I 's fotch' 'im ter you ter be straighten' up. You 's had 'casion ter deal wid 'im once, so he knows w'at ter expec'. You des take 'im in han', en lemme know how he tu'ns out. En w'en de han's comes in fum de fiel' dis ebenin' you kin sen' dat yaller nigger Jeff up ter de house. I 'll try 'im, en see ef he's any better 'n Hannibal.'

"So Jeff went up ter de big house, en pleas' Mars' Dugal' en ole mis' en de res' er de fambly so well dat dey all got ter lackin' 'im fus'rate; en dey 'd 'a' fergot all 'bout Hannibal, ef it had n' be'n fer de bad repo'ts w'at come up fum de qua'ters 'bout 'im fer a mont' er so. Fac' is, dat Chloe en Jeff wuz so int'rusted in one ernudder sence Jeff be'n up ter de house, dat dey fergot all 'bout takin' de baby doll back ter Aun' Peggy, en it kep' wukkin' fer a w'ile, en makin' Hannibal's feet bu'n mo' er less, 'tel all de folks on de plantation got ter callin' 'im Hot-Foot Hannibal. He kep' gittin' mo' en mo' triflin', 'tel he got de name er bein' de mos' no 'countes' nigger on de plantation, en Mars' Dugal' had ter th'eaten ter sell 'im in de spring, w'en bimeby de goopher quit wukkin', en Hannibal 'mence' ter pick up some en make folks set a little mo' sto' by 'im.

"Now, dis yer Hannibal was a monst'us sma't nigger, en w'en he got rid er dem so' feet, his min' kep' runnin' on 'is udder troubles. Heah th'ee er fo' weeks befo' he 'd had a' easy job, waitin' on de w'ite folks, libbin' off'n de fat er de lan', en promus' de fines' gal on de plantation fer a wife in de spring, en now heah he wuz back in de co'n-fiel, wid de oberseah a-cussin' en a-r'arin' ef he did n' get a ha'd tas' done; wid nuffin but co'n bread en bacon en merlasses ter eat; en all de fiel'-han's makin' rema'ks, en pokin' fun at 'im 'ca'se he'd be'n sont back fum de big house ter de fiel'. En de mo' Hannibal studied 'bout it de mo' madder he got, 'tel he fin'lly swo' he wuz gwine ter git eben wid Jeff en Chloe, ef it wuz de las' ac'.

"So Hannibal slipped 'way fum de qua'ters one Sunday en hid in de co'n up close ter de big house, 'tel he see Chloe gwine down de road. He waylaid her, en sezee:—

"'Hoddy, Chloe?'

"'I ain' got no time fer ter fool wid fiel'-han's,' sez Chloe, tossin' her head; 'w'at you want wid me, Hot-Foot?'

"'I wants ter know how you en Jeff is gittin' 'long.'

"'I 'lows dat's none er yo' bizness, nigger. I doan see w'at 'casion any common fiel'-han' has got ter mix in wid de 'fairs er folks w'at libs in de big house. But ef it'll do you any good ter know, I mought say dat me en Jeff is gittin' 'long mighty well, en we gwine ter git married in de spring, en you ain' gwine ter be 'vited ter de weddin' nuther.'

"'No, no!' sezee, 'I would n' 'spec' ter be 'vited ter de weddin',—a common, low-down fiel'-han' lack I is. But I's glad ter heah you en Jeff is gittin' 'long so well. I did n' knowed but w'at he had 'mence' ter be a little ti'ed.'

"'Ti'ed er me? Dat's rediklus!' sez Chloe. 'W'y, dat nigger lubs me so I b'liebe he 'd go th'oo fire en water fer me. Dat nigger is des wrop' up in me.'

"'Uh huh,' sez Hannibal, 'den I reckon it mus' be some udder nigger w'at meets a 'oman down by de crick in de swamp eve'y Sunday ebenin', ter say nuffin 'bout two er th'ee times a week.'

"'Yas, hit is ernudder nigger, en you is a liah w'en you say it wuz Jeff.'

"'Mebbe I is a liah, en mebbe I ain' got good eyes. But 'less'n I is a liah, en 'less'n I ain' got good eyes, Jeff is gwine ter meet dat 'oman dis ebenin' 'long 'bout eight o'clock right down dere by de crick in de swamp 'bout half-way betwix' dis plantation en Mars' Marrabo Utley's.'

"'Well, Chloe tol' Hannibal she did n' b'liebe a wo'd he said, en call 'im a low-down nigger, who wuz tryin' ter slander Jeff 'ca'se he wuz mo' luckier 'n he wuz. But all de same, she could n' keep her min' fum runnin' on w'at Hannibal had said. She 'membered she 'd heared one er de niggers say dey wuz a gal ober at Mars' Marrabo Utley's plantation w'at Jeff use' ter go wid some befo' he got 'quainted wid Chloe. Den she 'mence' ter figger back, en sho' 'nuff, dey wuz two er th'ee times in de las' week w'en she 'd be'n he'pin' de ladies wid dey dressin' en udder fixin's in de ebenin', en Jeff mought 'a' gone down ter de swamp widout her knowin' 'bout it at all. En den she 'mence' ter 'member little things w'at she had n' tuk no notice of befo', en w'at 'u'd make it 'pear lack Jeff had sump'n on his min'.

"'Chloe set a monst'us heap er sto' by Jeff, en would 'a' done mos' anythin' fer 'im, so long ez he stuck ter her. But Chloe wuz a mighty jealous 'oman, en w'iles she didn' b'liebe w'at Hannibal said, she seed how it could 'a' be'n so, en she 'termine' fer ter fin' out fer herse'f whuther it wuz so er no.

"'Now, Chloe had n' seed Jeff all day, fer Mars' Dugal' had sont Jeff ober ter his daughter's house, young Mis' Ma'g'ret's, w'at libbed 'bout fo' miles fum Mars' Dugal's, en Jeff wuz n' 'spected home 'tel ebenin'. But des atter supper wuz ober, en w'iles de ladies wuz settin' out on de piizzer, Chloe slip' off fum de house en run down de road,—dis yer same road we come; en w'en she got mos' ter de crick—dis yer same crick right befo' us—she kin' er kep' in de bushes at de side er de road, 'tel fin'lly she seed Jeff

settin' on de bank on de udder side er de crick,—right unner dat ole wilier-tree droopin' ober de water yander. En eve'y now en den he 'd git up en look up de road to'ds Mars' Marrabo's on de udder side er de swamp.

"Fus' Chloe felt lack she 'd go right ober de crick en gib Jeff a piece er her min'. Den she 'lowed she better be sho' befo' she done anythin'. So she helt herse'f in de bes' she could, gittin' madder en madder eve'y minute, 'tel bimeby she seed a 'oman comin' down de road on de udder side fum to'ds Mars' Marrabo Utley's plantation. En w'en she seed Jeff jump up en run to'ds dat 'oman, en th'ow his a'ms roun' her neck, po' Chloe did n' stop ter see no mo', but des tu'nt roun' en run up ter de house, en rush' up on de piazzer, en up en tol' Mars' Dugal' en ole mis' all 'bout de baby doll, en all 'bout Jeff gittin' de goopher fum Aun' Peggy, en 'bout w'at de goopher had done ter Hannibal.

"Mars' Dugal' wuz monst'us mad. He did n' let on at fus' lack he b'liebed Chloe, but w'en she tuk en showed 'im whar ter fin' de baby doll, Mars' Dugal' tu'nt w'ite ez chalk.

""Wat debil's wuk is dis?" sezee. 'No wonder de po' nigger's feet eetched. Sump'n got ter be done ter l'arn dat ole witch ter keep her han's off'n my niggers. En ez fer dis yer Jeff, I'm gwine ter do des w'at I promus', so de darkies on dis plantation'll know I means w'at I sez.'

"Fer Mars' Dugal' had warned de han's befo' 'bout foolin' wid cunju'ation; fac', he had los' one er two niggers his-se'f fum dey bein' goophered, en he would 'a' had ole Aun' Peggy whip' long ago, on'y Aun' Peggy wuz a free 'oman, en he wuz 'feard she 'd cunjuh him. En w'iles Mars' Dugal' say he did n' b'liebe in cunj'in' en sich, he 'peared ter 'low it wuz bes' ter be on de safe side, en let Aun' Peggy alone.

"So Mars' Dugal' done des ez he say. Ef ole mis' had ple'd fer Jeff, he mought 'a' kep' 'im. But ole mis' had n' got ober losin' dem bulbs yit, en she neber said a wo'd. Mars' Dugal' tuk Jeff ter town nex' day en' sol' 'im ter a spekilater, who sta'ted down de ribber wid 'im nex' mawnin' on a steamboat, fer ter take 'im ter Alabama.

"Now, w'en Chloe tol' ole Mars' Dugal' 'bout dis yer baby doll en dis udder goopher, she had n' ha'dly 'lowed Mars' Dugal' would sell Jeff down Souf. Howsomeber, she wuz so mad wid Jeff dat she 'suaded herse'f she did n' keer; en so she hilt her head up en went roun' lookin' lack she wuz rale glad 'bout it. But one day she wuz walkin' down de road, w'en who sh'd come 'long but dis yer Hannibal.

"W'en Hannibal seed 'er, he bus' out laffin' fittin' fer ter kill: 'Yah, yah, yah! ho, ho, ho! ha, ha, ha! Oh, hol' me, honey, hol' me, er I'll laf myse'f ter def. I ain' nebber laf' so much sence I be'n bawn.'

""Wat you laffin' at, Hot-Foot?"

""Yah, yah, yah! Wat I laffin' at? W'y, I's laffin' at myse'f, tooby sho',—laffin' ter think w'at a fine 'oman I made.'

"Chloe tu'nt pale, en her hea't come up in her mouf.

""Wat you mean, nigger?" sez she, ketchin' holt er a bush by de road fer ter stiddy herse'f. 'Wat you mean by de kin' er 'oman you made?"

""Wat do I mean? I means dat I got squared up wid you fer treatin' me de way you done, en I got eben wid dat yaller nigger Jeff fer cuttin' me out. Now, he's gwine ter know w'at it is ter eat co'n bread en

merlasses once mo', en wuk fum daylight ter da'k, en ter hab a oberseah dribin' 'im fum one day's een' ter de udder. I means dat I sont wo'd ter Jeff dat Sunday dat you wuz gwine ter be ober ter Mars' Marrabo's visitin' dat ebenin', en you want 'im ter meet you down by de crick on de way home en go de rest er de road wid you. En den I put on a frock en a sunbonnet, en fix' myse'f up ter look lack a 'oman; en w'en Jeff seed me comin', he run ter meet me, en you seed 'im,—fer I 'd be'n watchin' in de bushes befo' en 'skivered you comin' down de road. En now I reckon you en Jeff bofe knows w'at it means ter mess wid a nigger lack me.'

"Po' Chloe had n' heard mo' d'n half er de las' part er w'at Hannibal said, but she had heard 'nuff to l'arn dat dis nigger had fooled her en Jeff, en dat po' Jeff had n' done nuffin, en dat fer lovin' her too much en goin' ter meet her she had cause' 'im ter be sol' erway whar she 'd neber, neber see 'im no mo'. De sun mought shine by day, de moon by night, de flowers mought bloom, en de mawkin'-birds mought sing, but po' Jeff wuz done los' ter her fereber en fereber.

"Hannibal had n' mo' d'n finish' w'at he had ter say, w'en Chloe's knees gun 'way unner her, en she fell down in de road, en lay dere half a' hour er so befo' she come to. W'en she did, she crep' up ter de house des ez pale ez a ghos'. En fer a mont' er so she crawled roun' de house, en 'peared ter be so po'ly dat Mars' Dugal' sont fer a doctor; en de doctor kep' on axin' her questions 'tel he foun' she wuz des pinin' erway fer Jeff.

"Wen he tol' Mars' Dugal', Mars' Dugal' lafft, en said he 'd fix dat. She could hab de noo house boy fer a husban'. But ole mis' say, no, Chloe ain' dat kin'er gal, en dat Mars' Dugal' sh'd buy Jeff back.

"So Mars' Dugal' writ a letter ter dis yer spekilater down ter Wim'l'ton, en tol' ef he ain' done sol' dat nigger Souf w'at he bought fum 'im, he'd lack ter buy 'im back ag'in. Chloe 'mence' ter pick up a little w'en ole mis' tol' her 'bout dis letter. Howsomeber, bimeby Mars' Dugal' got a' answer fum de spekilater, who said he wuz monst'us sorry, but Jeff had fell ove'boa'd er jumped off'n de steamboat on de way ter Wim'l'ton, en got drownded, en co'se he could n' sell 'im back, much ez he'd lack ter 'bleedge Mars' Dugal'.

"Well, atter Chloe heard dis, she wa'n't much mo' use ter nobody. She pu'tended ter do her wuk, en ole mis' put up wid her, en had de doctor gib her medicine, en let 'er go ter de circus, en all so'ts er things fer ter take her min' off'n her troubles. But dey did n' none un 'em do no good. Chloe got ter slippin' down here in de ebenin' des lack she 'uz comin' ter meet Jeff, en she 'd set dere unner dat wilier-tree on de udder side, en wait fer 'im, night atter night. Bimeby she got so bad de w'ite folks sont her ober ter young Mis' Ma'g'ret's fer ter gib her a change; but she runned erway de fus' night, en w'en dey looked fer 'er nex' mawnin', dey foun' her co'pse layin' in de branch yander, right 'cross fum whar we 're settin' now.

"Eber sence den," said Julius in conclusion, "Chloe's ha'nt comes eve'y ebenin' en sets down unner dat willer-tree en waits fer Jeff, er e'se walks up en down de road yander, lookin' en lookin', en waitin' en waitin', fer her sweethea't w'at ain' neber, neber come back ter her no mo'."

There was silence when the old man had finished, and I am sure I saw a tear in my wife's eye, and more than one in Mabel's.

"I think, Julius," said my wife, after a moment, "that you may turn the mare around and go by the long road."

The old man obeyed with alacrity, and I noticed no reluctance on the mare's part.

"You are not afraid of Chloe's haunt, are you?" I asked jocularly.

My mood was not responded to, and neither of the ladies smiled.

"Oh, no," said Annie, "but I've changed my mind. I prefer the other route."

When we had reached the main road and had proceeded along it for a short distance, we met a cart driven by a young negro, and on the cart were a trunk and a valise. We recognized the man as Malcolm Murchison's servant, and drew up a moment to speak to him.

"Who's going away, Marshall?" I inquired.

"Young Mistah Ma'colm gwine 'way on de boat ter Noo Yo'k dis ebenin', suh, en I'm takin' his things down ter de wharf, suh."

This was news to me, and I heard it with regret. My wife looked sorry, too, and I could see that Mabel was trying hard to hide her concern.

"He's comin' 'long behin', suh, en I 'spec's you'll meet 'im up de road a piece. He 's gwine ter walk down ez fur ez Mistah Jim Williams's, en take de buggy fum dere ter town. He 'spec's ter be gone a long time, suh, en say prob'ly he ain' neber comin' back."

The man drove on. There were a few words exchanged in an undertone between my wife and Mabel, which I did not catch. Then Annie said: "Julius, you may stop the rockaway a moment. There are some trumpet-flowers by the road there that I want. Will you get them for me, John?"

I sprang into the underbrush, and soon returned with a great bunch of scarlet blossoms.

"Where is Mabel?" I asked, noting her absence.

"She has walked on ahead. We shall overtake her in a few minutes."

The carriage had gone only a short distance when my wife discovered that she had dropped her fan.

"I had it where we were stopping. Julius, will you go back and get it for me?"

Julius got down and went back for the fan. He was an unconscionably long time finding it. After we got started again we had gone only a little way, when we saw Mabel and young Murchison coming toward us. They were walking arm in arm, and their faces were aglow with the light of love.

I do not know whether or not Julius had a previous understanding with Malcolm Murchison by which he was to drive us round by the long road that day, nor do I know exactly what motive influenced the old man's exertions in the matter. He was fond of Mabel, but I was old enough, and knew Julius well enough, to be skeptical of his motives. It is certain that a most excellent understanding existed between him and Murchison after the reconciliation, and that when the young people set up housekeeping over at the old Murchison place, Julius had an opportunity to enter their service. For some reason or other,

however, he preferred to remain with us. The mare, I might add, was never known to balk again.

A PLEA FOR INDUSTRIAL OPPORTUNITY[30]

BY FANNY JACKSON COPPIN

from *Masterpieces of Negro Eloquence*

*The Best Speeches Delivered by the Negro from the days of
Slavery to the Present Time*

Author: Various

Editor: Alice Moore Dunbar-Nelson

Release Date: August 4, 2007 [EBook #22240]

FANNY MIRIAM JACKSON COPPIN, _the first Negro woman in America to graduate from college--Oberlin, 1865. From 1837 to 1902, teacher and principal of the Institute for Colored Youth in Philadelphia._

[Note 30: Delivered at a fair in Philadelphia, held in the interest of the _Christian Recorder_.]

The great lesson to be taught by this Fair is the value of co-operative effort to make our cents dollars, and to show us what help there is for ourselves in ourselves. That the colored people of this country have enough money to materially alter their financial condition, was clearly demonstrated by the millions of dollars deposited in the Freedmen's Bank; that they have the good sense, and the unanimity to use this power, are now proved by this industrial exhibition and fair.

It strikes me that much of the recent talk about the exodus has proceeded upon the high-handed assumption that, owing largely to the credit system of the South, the colored people there are forced to the alternative, to "curse God, and die," or else "go West." Not a bit of it. The people of the South, it is true, cannot at this time produce hundreds of dollars, but they have millions of pennies; and millions of pennies make tens of thousands of dollars. By clubbing together and lumping their pennies, a fund might be raised in the cities of the South that the poorer classes might fall back upon while their crops are growing; or else, by the opening of co-operative stores, become their own creditors and so effectually rid themselves of their merciless extortioners. "Oh, they won't do anything; you can't get them united on anything!" is frequently expressed. The best way for a man to prove that he can do a thing is to do it, and that is what we have shown we can do. This Fair, participated in by twenty four States in the Union, and gotten up for a purpose which is of no pecuniary benefit to those concerned in it, effectually silences all slanders about "we won't or we can't do," and teaches its own instructive and greatly needed lessons of self-help,--the best help that any man can have, next to God's.

Those in charge, who have completed the arrangement of the Fair, have studiously avoided preceding it with noisy and demonstrative babblings, which are so often the vapid precursors of promises as empty as those who make them; therefore, in some quarters, our Fair has been

overlooked. It is not, we think, a presumptuous interpretation of this great movement, to say, that the voice of God now seems to utter "Speak to the people that they go forward." "Go forward" in what respect? Teach the millions of poor colored laborers of the South how much power they have in themselves, by co-operation of effort, and by a combination of their small means, to change the despairing poverty which now drives them from their homes, and makes them a millstone around the neck of any community, South or West. Secondly, that we shall go forward in asking to enter the same employments which other people enter. Within the past ten years we have made almost no advance in getting our youth into industrial and business occupations. It is just as hard for instance, to get a boy into a printing-office now as it was ten years ago. It is simply astonishing when we consider how many of the common vocations of life colored people are shut out of. Colored men are not admitted to the printers' trade-union, nor, with very rare exceptions are they employed in any city of the United States in a paid capacity as printers or writers; one of the rare exceptions being the employment of H. Price Williams, on the Sunday Press of this city. We are not employed as salesmen or pharmacists, or saleswomen, or bank clerks, or merchants' clerks, or tradesmen, or mechanics, or telegraph operators, or to any degree as State or government officials, and I could keep on with the string of "ors" until to-morrow morning, but the patience of an audience has its limit.

Slavery made us poor, and its gloomy, malicious shadow tends to keep us so. I beg to say, kind hearers, that this is not spoken in a spirit of recrimination. We have no quarrel with our fate, and we leave your Christianity to yourselves. Our faith is firmly fixed in that "Eternal Providence," that in its own good time will "justify the ways of God to man." But, believing that to get the right men into the right places is a "consummation most devoutly to be wished," it is a matter of serious concern to us to see our youth with just as decided diversity of talent as any other people, herded together into but three or four occupations.

It is cruel to make a teacher or a preacher of a man who ought to be a printer or a blacksmith, and that is exactly the condition we are now obliged to submit to. The greatest advance that has been made since the War has been effected by political parties, and it is precisely the political positions that we think it least desirable our youth should fill. We have our choice of the professions, it is true, but, as we have not been endowed with an overwhelming abundance of brains, it is not probable that we can contribute to the bar a great lawyer except once in a great while. The same may be said of medicine; nor are we able to tide over the "starving time," between the reception of a diploma and the time that a man's profession becomes a paying one.

Being determined to know whether this industrial and business ostracism lay in ourselves or "in our stars," we have from time to time, knocked, shaken, and kicked, at these closed doors of employment. A cold,

metallic voice from within replies, "We do not employ colored people." Ours not to make reply, ours not to question why. Thank heaven, we are not obliged to do and die; having the preference to do or die, we naturally prefer to do.

But we cannot help wondering if some ignorant or faithless steward of God's work and God's money hasn't blundered. It seems necessary that we should make known to the good men and women who are so solicitous about our souls, and our minds, that we haven't quite got rid of our bodies yet, and until we do, we must feed and clothe them; and this attitude of keeping us out of work forces us back upon charity.

That distinguished thinker, Mr. Henry C. Carey, in his valuable works on political economy, has shown by the truthful and forceful logic of history, that the elevation of all peoples to a higher moral and intellectual plane, and to a fuller investiture of their civil rights, has always steadily kept pace with the improvement in their physical condition. Therefore we feel that resolutely and in unmistakable language, yet in the dignity of moderation, we should strive to make known to all men the justice of our claims to the same employments as other's under the same conditions. We do not ask that anyone of our people shall be put into a position because he is a colored person, but we do most emphatically ask that he shall not be kept out of a position because he is a colored person. "An open field and no favors" is all that is requested. The time was when to put a colored girl or boy behind a counter would have been to decrease custom; it would have been a tax upon the employer, and a charity that we were too proud to accept; but public sentiment has changed. I am satisfied that the employment of a colored clerk or a colored saleswoman wouldn't even be a "nine days' wonder." It is easy of accomplishment, and yet it is not. To thoughtless and headstrong people who meet duty with impertinent dictation I do not now address myself; but to those who wish the most gracious of all blessings, a fuller enlightenment as to their duty,--to those I beg to say, think of what is suggested in this appeal.

THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL AND CHURCH AS A SOLUTION OF THE NEGRO PROBLEM[35]

BY D. WEBSTER DAVIS, D. D.

of Richmond, Virginia

from *ibid*

[Note 35: Delivered at the International, Interdenominational Sunday-school Convention, Massey Hall, Toronto, Canada, June 27, 1905.]

If I were asked to name the most wonderful and far-reaching achievement of the splendid, all-conquering Anglo-Saxon race, I would ignore the Pass of Thermopylæ, the immortal six hundred at Balaklava, Trafalgar, Waterloo, Quebec, Bunker Hill, Yorktown, and Appomattox; I would forget its marvelous accumulations of wealth; its additions to the literature of the world, and point to the single fact that it has done the most to spread the religion of Jesus Christ, as the greatest thing it has accomplished for the betterment of the human family.

The Jews preserved the idea of a one God, and gave the ethics to religion--the ten commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Sermon on the Mount; the Greeks contributed philosophy; the Romans, polity; the Teutons, liberty and breadth of thought; but it remained to the Anglo-Saxon implicitly to obey the divine command: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."

If some man would ask me the one act on the part of my own race that gives to me the greatest hope for the Negro's ultimate elevation to the heights of civilization and culture, I would not revel in ancient lore to prove them the pioneers in civilization, nor would I point to their marvelous progress since Emancipation that has surprised their most sanguine friends, but I would take the single idea of their unquestioned acceptance of the dogmas and tenets of the Christian religion as promulgated by the Anglo-Saxon, as the highest evidence of the future possibilities of the race.

Ours was indeed a wonderful faith that overleaped the barriers of ecclesiastical juggling to justify from Holy Writ the iniquitous traffic in human flesh and blood; forgot the glaring inconsistencies of a religion that prayed, on Sunday, "Our Father which art in heaven," and on Monday sold a brother, who, though cut in ebony, was yet the image of the Divine. The Negro had in very truth,

"That faith that would not shrink,
Tho' pressed by every foe;
That would not tremble on the brink
Of any earthly woe.
That faith that shone more bright and clear
When trials reigned without;
That, when in danger, knew no fear,

In darkness felt no doubt."

If it is indeed true that "by faith are ye saved," not only in this world, but in the world to come, then God will vouchsafe to us a most abundant salvation.

It is my blessed privilege to-night, while you are pleading for the "Winning of a generation," and at this special session for "the relation of the Sunday-school to missions, both home and foreign," to plead for my people, and my prayer is that God may help me to make my plea effective. For the people for whom I plead are bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. I plead for help for my own bright-eyed boy and girl, and for all the little black boys and girls in my far-off Southern home.

If the great race problem is to be settled (and it is a problem, notwithstanding all that has been said to the contrary), it is to be settled, not in blood and carnage, not by material wealth and accumulation of lands and houses, not in literary culture nor on the college campus, not in industrial education, or in the marts of trade, but by the religion of Him who said, "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." These things are resultant factors in the problem, but the problem itself lies far deeper than these.

Calhoun is reported to have said, "If I could find a Negro who could master the Greek syntax, I would believe in his possibilities of development." A comparatively few years have passed away, and a Negro not only masters the Greek syntax, but writes a Greek grammar accepted as authority by some of the ablest scholars of the States. But Abbé Gregori of France published, in the fifteenth century, "Literature of the Negro," telling of the achievements of Negro writers, scholars, priests, philosophers, painters, and Roman prelates in Spain, Portugal, France, Italy, Holland, and Turkey, which prompted Blumenbach to declare it would be difficult to meet with such in the French Academy; and yet, literature and learning have not settled the problem. No, the religion of Jesus Christ is the touchstone to settle all the problems of human life. More than nineteen hundred years ago, Christ gave solution when he said, "Ye are brethren," "Love is the fulfilling of the law," and "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

Is the Negro in any measure deserving of the help for which I plead? The universal brotherhood, and common instincts of humanity should be enough. I bring more. Othello, in speaking of Desdemona, says, "She loved me for the dangers I had passed, I loved her that she did pity me." If pity and suffering can awaken sympathy, then we boldly claim our right to the fullest measure of consideration. Two hundred and fifty years of slavery, with all its attendant evils, is one of our most potent weapons to enlist sympathy and aid.

I come with no bitterness to North or South. For slavery I acknowledge all the possible good that came to us from it; the contact with superior civilization, the knowledge of the true God, the crude preparation for citizenship, the mastery of some handicraft; yet, slavery had its side of suffering and degradation. North and South rejoice that it is gone forever, and yet, many of its evils cling to us, like the Old Man of the Sea to Sinbad the sailor, and, like Banquo's ghost, they haunt us still.

As I stand here to-night, my mind is carried back to a plantation down in "Old Virginia." It is the first day of January, 1864. Lincoln's immortal proclamation is a year old, and yet I see an aunt of mine, the unacknowledged offspring of her white master, being sent away from the old homestead to be sold. The proud Anglo-Saxon blood in her veins will assert itself as she resists with all the power of her being the attempts of the overseer to ply lash to her fair skin, and for this she must be sold "Way down Souf." I see her now as she comes down from the "Great House," chained to twelve others, to be carried to Lumpkin's jail in Richmond to be put upon the "block." She had been united to a slave of her choice some two years before, and a little innocent babe had been born to them. The husband, my mother with the babe in her arms, and other slaves watch them from the "big gate" as they come down to the road to go to their destination some twenty miles away. As she saw us, great tears welled up in her big black eyes; not a word could she utter as she looked her last sad farewell. She thought of one of the old slave-songs we used to sing in the cabin prayer-meetings at night as we turned up the pots and kettles, and filled them up with water to drown the sound. Being blessed, as is true of most of my race, with a splendid voice, she raised her eyes, and began to sing:

"Brethren, fare you well, brethren, fare you well,
May God Almighty bless you until we meet again."

Singing these touching lines she passed out of sight. More than forty years have passed, and she and her loved ones have never met again, unless they have met in the Morning land, where partings are no more.

For the sufferings we have endured, leaving their traces indelibly stamped upon us, I claim your aid that we may have for our children this blessed Gospel, the panacea for all human ills.

The Negro has elements in his nature that make him peculiarly susceptible to religious training. He stands as a monument to faithfulness to humble duty, one of the highest marks of the Christ-life. He is humble and faithful, but not from cowardice, in evidence of which I recall his achievements at Boston, Bunker Hill, New Orleans, Milikens Bend, Wilson's Landing, and San Juan Hill.

He fought when a slave, some would say, from compulsion, but would he fight for love of the flag of the Union? God gave him a chance to answer

the question at San Juan Hill. The story is best understood as told to me by one of the brave 9th Cavalry as he lay wounded at Old Point Comfort, Va.

* * * * *

Up go the splendid Rough Riders amid shot and shell from enemies concealed in fields, trees, ditches, and the block-house on the hill. The galling fire proves too much for them and back they come. A second and third assault proves equally unavailing. They must have help. Help arrives, in the form of a colored regiment. See them as they come, black as the sable plume of midnight, yet irresistible as the terrible cyclone. As is the custom of my race under excitement of any kind, they are singing, not

"My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of Liberty,
Of thee I sing,"

though fighting willingly for the land that gave them birth; not, "The Bonnie blue flag," though they were willing to die for the flag they loved; they sing a song never heard on battle-field before, "There's a hot time in the old town to-night." On they come, trampling on the dead bodies of their comrades; they climb the hill. "To the rear!" is the command. "To the front!" they cry; and leaderless, with officers far in the rear, they plant the flag on San Juan Hill, and prove to the world that Negroes can fight for love of country.

They were faithful to humble duty in the dark days of the South from 1861 to 1865. When Jefferson Davis had called for troops until he had well-nigh decimated the fair Southland, and even boys, in their devotion to the cause they loved dearly, were willing to go to the front, my young master came to my old mistress and asked to be allowed to go. Calling my Uncle Isaac, my old mistress said to him, "Isaac, go along with your young Mars Edmund, take good care of him, and bring him home to me." "I gwya do de bes I kin," was his reply. Off these two went, amid the tears of the whole plantation, and we heard no more of them for some time. One night we were startled to hear the dogs howling down in the pasture-lot, always to the Southern heart a forewarning of death. A few nights thereafter, my mother heard a tapping on the kitchen window, and, on going to the door, saw Uncle Isaac standing there--alone. "What in the world are you doing here?" was the question of my mother. "Whar's mistis'?" was the interrogative answer. My mother went to call the mistress, who, white as a sheet repeated the question. "Mistis', I done de bes' I could." Going a few paces from the door, while the soft southern moon shone pitilessly through the solemn pines, he brought the dead body of his young master and laid it tenderly at his mother's feet. He had brought his dead "massa" on his back a distance of more than twenty miles from the battle-field, thus faithfully keeping his promise.

Such an act of devotion can never be forgotten while memory holds its sacred office. Not one case of nameless crime was ever heard in those days, though the flower of the womanhood of the South was left practically helpless in the hands of black men in Southern plantations.

"But as a faithful watch-dog stands and guards with jealous eye,
He cared for master's wife and child, and at the door would lie,
To shed his blood in their defense, 'gainst traitors, thieves, and knaves,
Altho' those masters went to fight to keep them helpless slaves."

Some have claimed that, instead of putting so much money in churches, the Negro, after the war, should have built mills and factories, and thus would have advanced more rapidly in civilization; but I rejoice that he did build churches, and to-day can say that of the three hundred millions he has accumulated, more than forty millions are in church property in the sixteen Southern States. This shows his fidelity and gratitude to God, and that by intuition he had grasped the fundamental fact that faith and love and morality are greater bulwarks for the perpetuity of a nation than material wealth; that somehow he was in accord with God's holy mandate that "man does not live by bread alone." Guided by a superior wisdom, he first sought the kingdom of heaven, and it does seem that "all these things" are slowly being added to him. Education and wealth, unsanctified by the grace of God, are after all, curses rather than a blessing. We are to rise, not by our strong bodies, our intellectual powers, or material wealth, although these are necessary concomitants, but by the virtue, character, and honesty of our men and women.

We are proud of our 30,000 teachers, 2,000 graduated doctors, 1,000 lawyers, 20,000 ordained ministers, 75,000 business men, 400 patentees, and 250,000 farms all paid for, as evidences of our possibilities, but proudest of the fact that nearly three millions of our almost ten millions of Negroes are professing Christians. It is true that the black man is not always the best kind of a Christian. He is often rather crude in worship, with a rather hazy idea of the connection between religion and morality. A colored man, on making a loud profession of religion, was asked if he were going to pay a certain debt he had contracted, remarked, "'Ligun is 'ligun, an' bisnes' is bisnes', an' I aint gwy mix um," yet I am afraid ours is not the only race that fails to "mix um," and he does not have to go far to find others with advantages far superior to his, who have not reached the delectable mountain. We, like others, are seeking higher ground, and some have almost reached it. Thank God we can point to thousands of Negro Christians whose faith is as strong as that of the prophets of old, and whose lives are as pure and sweet as the morning dew.

Our greatest curse to-day is the rum-shop, kept far too often by men of the developed and forward race to filch from us our hard earnings, and give us shame and misery in return. And a man who would deliberately

debauch and hinder a backward race, struggling for the light, would "rob the dead, steal the orphan's bread, pillage the palace of the King of Kings, and clip the angels' pinions while they sing."

Right by the side of this hindrance, especially in the country districts, is our ignorant, and, in too many cases, venial ministry, for ignorance is the greatest curse on earth, save sin. The Sunday-school is destined to be the most potent factor in the removal of this evil. As our children see the light as revealed in the Sunday-school by the teachers of God's word, they will demand an intelligent and moral ministry and will support no other. Let me say to you that there is no agency doing more in that absolutely necessary and fundamental line than this God-sent association.

Wherever your missionaries have gone, there have been magical and positive changes for good, and the elevating power of this work for us can never be told. God bless the thousands of Sunday-school teachers whose names may never be known outside their immediate circles, and yet are doing a work so grand and noble that angels would delight to come down and bear them company.

There is a beautiful story told in Greek mythology that when Ulysses was passing in his ship by the Isle of the Sirens, the beautiful sirens began to play their sweetest music to lure the sailors from their posts of duty. Ulysses and his sailors stuffed wax in their ears, and lashed themselves to the masts that they might not be lured away; but, when Orpheus passed by in the search of the golden fleece and heard the same sweet songs, he simply took out his harp and played sweeter music, and not a sailor desired to leave the vessel. The sirens of sin and crime are doing all in their power to lure us from the highest and best things in life. Wealth, education, political power are, after all, but wax in the ears, the ropes that may or may not hold us to the masts of safety; but that sweeter music of the heart, played on the harp of love by the fingers of faith will hold us stronger than "hoops of steel." Let the great Sunday-school movement continue to play for us this sweeter music, and no sirens can lure us away from truth and right and heaven. The mission that will be of real help to us will be the mission dictated by love, for no race is more susceptible to kindness than ours. It must be undertaken in the spirit of the Master who said, "I call ye not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends." The Negro loves his own and is satisfied to be with them, and yet, the man who would really help him must be a man who has seen the vision. Peter was unwilling to go to the Gentiles, being an orthodox Jew, until God put him in a trance upon the house top, let down the sheet from heaven with all manner of beasts, and bid him rise up, slay, and eat. Peter strenuously objected, saying, "Lord, I have touched nothing unclean." But God said, "What I have cleansed, call thou not unclean." Then Peter said, "I see of a truth that God is no respecter of persons, but has made of one blood all men to dwell upon all the face of

the earth."

I pray, I believe, that you have seen this vision, and in this spirit have come to help us. Sir Launfal, in searching for the Holy Grail, found it in ministering to the suffering and diseased at his own door. Ye who are in search of God's best gift can find it to-day in lifting up these ten millions of people at your door, broken by slavery, bound by ignorance, yet groping for the light. If we go down in sin and ignorance, we can not go alone, but must contaminate and curse millions unborn. If we go up, as in God's name we will, we will constitute the brightest star in your crown. What religion has done for others, it will do for us. See the triumphs of King Emanuel in Africa, Burmah, China, and the isles of the sea. It was Christianity that liberated four millions of slaves, and brought them to their better position. Christian men, North and South, are helping them to-day. We could not rise alone.

* * * * *

Has the Negro made improvement commensurate with the help he has received from North and South? I believe he has, and that each year finds him better than the last. Good Dr. Talmage was visiting a parishioner when a little girl sat on his knee. Seeing his seamed and wrinkled face, she asked, "Doctor, did God make you?" "Yes," was the reply. Then, looking at her own sweet, rosy face in a glass opposite, she asked, "Did God make me, too?" "Yes." "Did God make me after he made you?" "Yes, my child, why?" Looking again at his face and hers, she said, "Well. Doctor, God is doing better work these days."

God bless our mothers and fathers; no nobler souls ever lived under such circumstances; but God has answered their prayers, and with the young folks will do better work. The convention helps us to help ourselves, the only true help, and in this the conveners are investing in soul-power that pays the biggest dividends, and its bonds are always redeemable at the Bank of Heaven.

In a terrible storm at sea, when all the passengers were trembling with fear, one little boy stood calm and serene. "Why so calm, my little man?" asked one. "My father runs this ship," was the reply. I have too much confidence in what religion has done and too much faith in what it can do, to be afraid. "God's in his heaven, all's right with the world." Let each do his part to help on the cause.

"There is never a rose in all the world
But makes some green spray sweeter;
There is never a wind in all the sky
But makes some bird's wing fleeter;
There is never a star but brings to earth
Some silvery radiance tender,
And never a sunset cloud but helps

To cheer the sunset's splendor.
No robin but may cheer some heart,
Its dawnlight gladness voicing;
God gives us all some small sweet way
To set the world rejoicing."

America, I believe, is destined of God to be the land that shall flow with milk and honey, the King's Highway, when the "ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away."

I see gathered upon our fair western plain nations of all the earth. The Italian is there and thinks of "Italia, fair Italia!" The Frenchman sings his "Marsellaise." The solid, phlegmatic German sings his "Die Wacht am Rhein." The Irish sing "Killarney" and "Wearin' the Green"; the Scotchman his "Blue Bells"; the Englishman, "God save the King!"; the American, the "Star-spangled Banner." God bless the patriot, but the ultimate end of all governments is that the Kingdom of Christ may prevail. One towering Christian man thinks of this, and seeing a black man standing by without home or country remembers that "all are Christ's and Christ's is God's." He swings a baton high in air and starts a grand hallelujah chorus. Forgiven is all else as the grand chorus, white and black, of every age and every clime, sing till heaven's arches ring again, while angels from the battlements of heaven listen and wave anew the palm-branches from the trees of paradise, and the angels' choir that sang on the plains of Bethlehem more than nineteen hundred years ago join in the grand refrain,

"All hail the power of Jesus' name,
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown him Lord of all."

This compilation is in the public domain.